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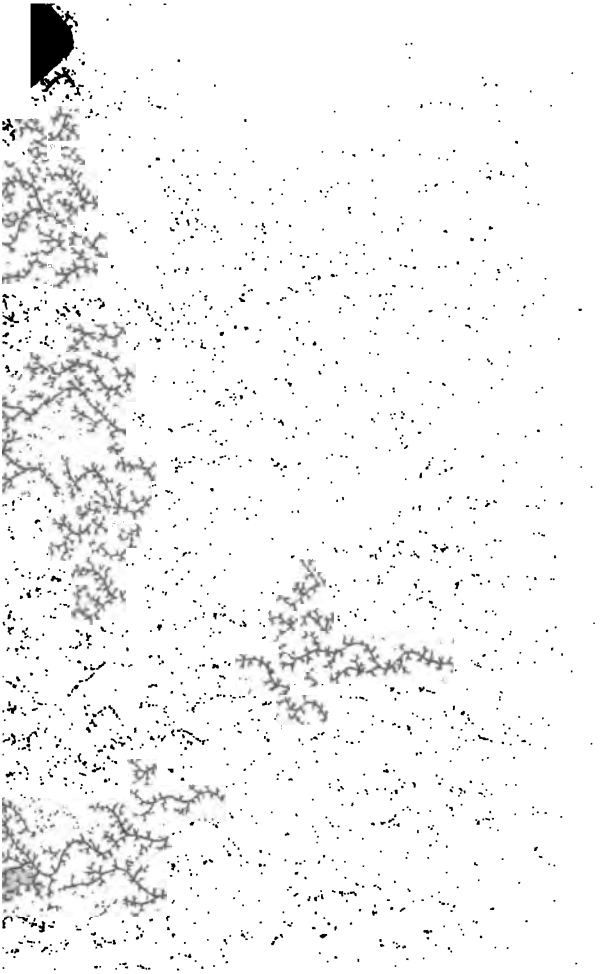

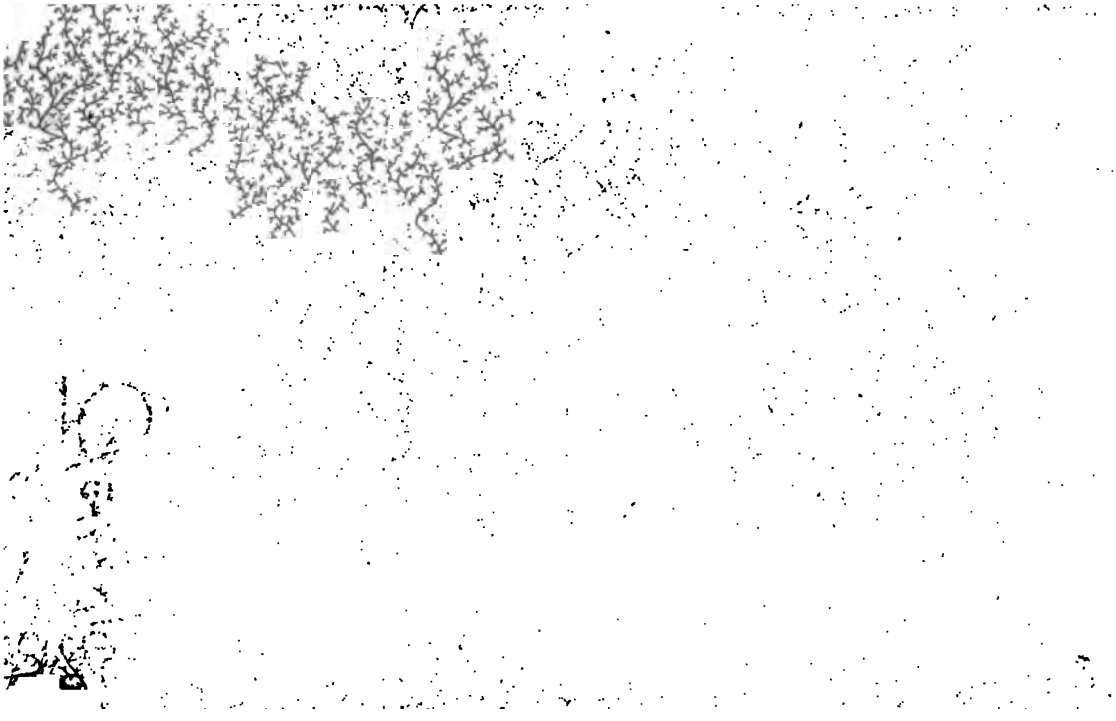

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AND OTHER STORIES

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THE MAN'S HANDS

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

R. P. GARROLD, S.J.

BENZIGER BROTHERS

PRINTERS TO THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE

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1908

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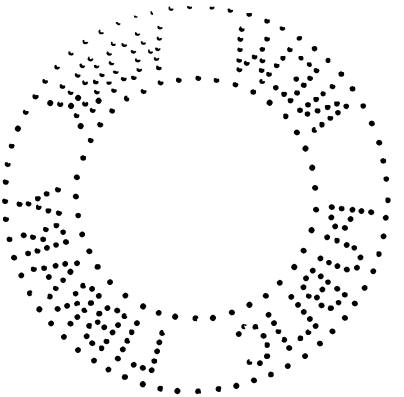

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PREFACE

THE stories in this volume pretend to be no more than stories. The amount of historical fact contained in them varies considerably, but in each case the main episode is fictitious. It is as a story-teller, and in no sense as a hagiographer that the author wishes to present his work.

Two of the stories—*The White Road* and *The King's Visit*—have already appeared in *The Month*, and are now republished with the kind permission of the editor. *The Man's Hands* is new.

R. P. G.

June 9, 1908.

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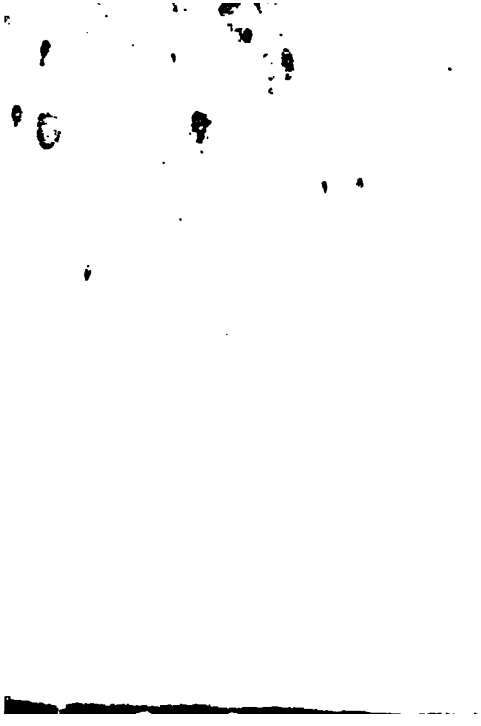

THE MAN'S HANDS

CITY OF NEW YORK

THE MAN'S HANDS

CHAPTER I

"Tho' haply so long as I live I be unto Him obedient, and suffer for His sake all asperity and terrible things; shall my work for all that be equal to the prize that He hath prepared for me?"—FATHER SOUTHWELL.

IN the days when the name of the Tower of London was a name that frightened people, when its associations were all dreadful and coloured with blood, instead of, as now, vaguely suggestive of sight-seeing and sixpenny guide-books, there lived a little boy, and he lived in the Tower. Now you might live in the Tower in many capacities; the Queen herself lived there sometimes in the part that was a palace—a splendid part, all light and joyfulness, where silken tapestries hid the grim stone

walls, and the clanking was of dishes and plates instead of chains. Our old kings placed the Heaven they made for their delight in the midst of the Hell they had created for political purposes, perhaps that the contrast might add a new relish to their feasting—ancient books of cookery reveal the fact that the palate of our ancestors was coarse.

But it was not as a prince that our Little Boy lived there; he had no silk stockings to put on, and his limbs were unencumbered by those terrific pantaloons with which, on festive occasions, the gilded youth of the period were accustomed to adorn themselves. He went about bare-legged, and in a smock of the coarsest material the looms of the Spital weavers could produce; a smock, too, made from a remnant, for the mother of our Little Boy was frugal, and his were not the only limbs demanding her attention.

But if he were not a prince, still less was

he a prisoner. His father, although he lived in the Tower, unlike so many of its denizens, was paid for doing so. He received every month, from a gentleman of the Governor's, a fixed number of marks, occupied free a small house within the walls, enjoyed the privilege of cutting six loads of firewood per annum from the Queen's manor of Eltham over the water, and every Christmas partook of her bounty in the shape of a small cask of Burgundy wine. There was a chapel in the Tower, and in return for all these benefactions the father of our Little Boy looked after it, swept it, laid out the table with a fair white linen cloth, as the rubrics of the Queen's new prayer-book prescribed; called a sonorous "Amen" when the same authority demanded that all the people should utter that ejaculation. And as for the decorations of the table, a matter even then somewhat hazardous, he made it as perfect an imitation as might be of that

other chapel, the chapel in the royal heaven. This was a safe rule, and at the time of which we write easy enough to keep; but in the earlier days, when the Queen's religion was still in the making, it involved sudden and startling transformations; candles and even a Crucifix being sometimes required, when the ambassador of His Highness of Spain was in the vicinity. For many years there slumbered at the bottom of a chest in the vestry two old wax candles with black wicks, that dated from Queen Mary's reign. The Clerk, like his wife, was frugal, and kept them in case they should be wanted. In the end the mice had them.

So our Little Boy, as you see, lived in a sort of middle region between Heaven and Hell, and had dealings with both, but mostly with the latter place. For his father drove a thriving trade with the tormented spirits, the greater part of the Christmas barrel of Burgundy, for example,

was disposed of to them on profitable terms. And our Little Boy was not infrequently the messenger employed in these transactions. And he had a further bond of sympathy with these unhappy people, for he himself was unhappy, and in some sort prisoner also. Chains were a part of his life and the silence of the dungeon, chains and a dungeon, it is true, of a different sort; but scarcely a whit less terrible. For he was of those upon whom God had laid a heavy burden of infirmity, and being now six years old he could not speak one word. The soul within him could look out upon the world and hear it speaking, but could not answer it or partake of its goodfellowship, just as the prisoners to whose wants he ministered could hear the bells of London chiming and the cries of the sailors on the river as they put out to sea, but, hearing and understanding, could return no answer at all, but must nurse a swelling heart in silence.

This dumbness, as may be supposed, was a great source of tribulation to his father the Clerk and to the good woman his mother. To his father, for it seemed in a manner unseemly and a reflection upon sound religion that his own child should be selected for this infliction, and when in the Decalogue the minister read in a loud voice that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, he felt unhappy and a sense of wrong, convinced that the congregation, whose broad backs he surveyed from his seat in the rear, were making a personal and painful application of that truth of Holy Writ. His mother inclined to the view that the biblical passage most applicable was that which describes the case of the boy who had a dumb devil, and she prayed long and fervently on the matter, and would have fasted unsparingly but for the Popish character of the practice. Her prayers bringing no relief, she

had recourse to a less questionable method of procedure, and took him secretly one evening at night-fall in a boat across the river, to be treated by the Wise Woman who lived in a hut among the marshes. And the Wise Woman put a horrible skinny finger upon his tongue, while his mother held him, and then she mumbled charms for nearly half-an-hour, and burnt some black stuff in a caldron. But this, too, had no result beyond the terrible dreams that tormented him for many months afterwards; a nightmare in which he awoke with teeth set tight and lips pressed close together to keep out the dreadful finger which poked at him from the darkness. In these moments of terror, when the need of speech was greatest and he felt his calamity most sorely, he would turn to his brother, who slept beside him, and clutch eagerly at him, and sometimes even strike him in his frenzy. And he was a good brother, for he understood this

rough language, though only a boy, perhaps because only a boy, and would put his arm round him protectingly, and, no matter how sleepy he was, would tell him stories. They were most often stories of dragons and the strong Knights who slew them, or stories of enchanted lands beyond the sea, learnt from the sailors as he wandered about on the wharfs by the river. But whatever the subject, they had the power of shutting out all thoughts of witches and such like fears of the night, having, like their simple inventor, too much good red blood in them for such lean and evil creatures to feel happy in their company.

Peter was the name of this brother, a big boy, with a fine bush of hair and a face of a jolly roundness, pleasant to look at for its ruddy clearness and the good blue of the eyes. He had a sister, too, whose name was Jane, more serious than Peter, who was always laughing, but quite as

kind. Jane was very clever at needle-work and other things, and could read very well; she used to teach our Little Boy, who, of course, could not go to school like Peter.

With these two strong helpers at his side his trouble was, at ordinary times, quite bearable; without them his lot would have been indeed terrible. For the other children in the Tower (with the exception of William, the Warder's son, about whom more later on) would have nothing to do with him, and the story of his visit to the witch having leaked out, they even began to ill-treat him, throwing mud and stones and calling him evil names. And Peter, I rejoice to remember, found them one day at work at this cruel business, and fell upon them all with great fury, beating the boys and pulling the hair of such of the girls as he could catch. And Jane, who was clever and came up at the right moment, spoke her mind to them and took

care that the matter should come to the ears of the school-master and the chaplain, and of such of their parents as she knew would take a right view of the matter; so that in many cases Peter's correction was only the prelude to one better ordered and efficient.

As things generally went, the strong arm of his brother and the shrewd brain of his sister, and the good hearts of both, were a sufficient protection to him. But there were occasions when, for a little, even these failed of their purpose. Such were when his mother would hold him for a long time at arm's length before her, without speaking, and he, looking into her face, would see tears come into her eyes and trickle down. Then she would shape words with her mouth very slowly, and he would try to do the same, but never a word would come. And his mother, after a while, would drop her head and hide her face, and rock to and fro, and would push him

away when he caught hold of her hand, her great sorrow making her cruel for the moment. Or again, when his father, who every evening said prayers for the whole family, made his infirmity the subject of a special petition, bewailing with many groans the chastisement which had fallen upon them, making at the end an elaborate and very wordy act of submission to the Will of God. Peter, on these occasions, used to be very puzzled, feeling that it was unkind to our Little Boy, and yet, being religion, must be good. Jane, who was less simple, and understood more clearly how much suffering these exercises caused deep down in the dark and silence of her brother's soul, would shuffle her feet about impatiently, and had once been heard to mutter almost aloud, "Oh, prithee, peace."

No one, not even Jane, knew how bitter the pain he suffered was, nor guessed the strange, dark and perplexing thoughts that came to him in the refuge to which he crept

under the wood-stack or behind the curtain of clothes hanging from the wall of the cupboard up-stairs. For he used to think that God could not be good really, since He had made such a dreadful mistake and given him a tongue that would not talk. And he would ponder the silly remark of a woman he had once heard, who said of a snub-nosed neighbour that *she* had not been behind the door when noses were given out, and reflect that this must be the reason of his calamity also. He had thought so much and dreamt so much about this that he had come to believe he could remember a time when he stood watching people go up to a great table covered all over with beautiful red tongues, and that they opened their mouths and had one fitted in with a click, and went away talking and singing to each other. And when his turn came somehow matters went wrong, he was standing in the wrong place, and he alone got no tongue and could not

talk and sing, and felt wildly angry at being punished so terribly for a fault he could not help. And then he felt despair at his own wickedness, who dared to be angry with God, and beat the wall with his fists, and trembled all over. It was a good thing that he was left seldom long alone in company with these dark thoughts, for Jane knew all his hiding-places, and went methodically from one to the other until she found him, and drew him out and wiped his eyes with the corner of her apron, and called Peter. And Peter would take him down to the river on his shoulder, or trot out some of his honest dragons for his entertainment, and always succeeded in driving away the blackness. It is well worth being lost in the fog for a little while for the sake of being found at last and carried home. All bad infidel thoughts then went clean away, for it was easy to love and trust the God Who made Peter.

It was on such an occasion as this, when

Peter, who as usual had been called in to the rescue, was carrying his little brother off to the river to see the ships, and one especially that had lately arrived laden with many foreign wonders from the West, that they met William the Warder's son, and had the adventure with which we are most concerned. Indeed, it is because of this adventure, and the strange and solemn events which followed it, that we have called up from their graves in the past, Peter and his dumb brother, and Jane and William, and the Clerk and his afflicted wife. Because the adventure was very strange and wonderful indeed, though in the beginning it seemed simple and ordinary enough.

They met William at the gate, and William was Peter's great friend, although very unlike him to look at. For while Peter's hair was fuzzy and yellow, and stood up in a bush, William's was lank and black, and hung down in long streaks. While Peter's face was round and ruddy,

William's was white and long; while Peter's broke into a smile as easily as a lake into ripples, William's hardly ever smiled, but he had a way of saying the funniest things with a solemnity. Nevertheless, they were great friends, and when they met this morning Peter told William at once where he was going to and what he was going to do.

William said to this that they would do better to come with him, for that he was going rat-hunting in a place where there were a great many rats. And at this he drew two ferrets out of a bag he carried, and held them up for Peter to take. And Peter took one and gave the other to our Little Boy to hold, while the ferrets, little furry, snake-like things, wriggled about and felt soft to the fingers, all the softer because you knew they might easily turn and bite to the bone.

William stood with arms akimbo and looked on with all the pride of ownership. Then he said that he would sell the skins

of the rats, if they caught enough of them, and added very handsomely that they should have a share of the money. And because it is obviously better to catch something for yourself than to see the catchings of others, however magnificent, Peter at once agreed to come, and left the ships in the river for another day. And having got heavy sticks from William's father's house, they went off to the hunting-ground, which was in a loft where lumber of different sorts was stored. But if you go to the Tower now and look for it you will look in vain, for it was in the part which was burnt down in the great fire.

The ferrets were loosened and disappeared down the rat holes, and after an exciting pause, during which muffled squeaking could be heard from down below, the rats began to appear, running for dear life from their tormentors, and were dealt with so effectually by the waiting huntsmen, that before long six soft grey bodies

lay in a row on the floor of the loft. The hunt was up, and no prince, with a green-clad army of servants to beat for him, ever had more royal sport. But the richest cover is exhausted after a time, and presently the ferrets came peering and wriggling back, and were taken up affectionately and put into the bag. They waited for a time in hopes of further sport, but no more rats appearing, they sought for other sources of amusement.

There was a square door in the wall at the end of the loft, bolted from inside with very rusty bolts. They opened this, and found that it looked out upon a little square enclosed on all sides by high walls so straitly that it looked like a square tower with the roof taken off. The wall on the one side was the wall of the great keep itself, built, as was believed, by Julius Cæsar the Roman, and from a window high up there fluttered a piece of white linen, which might be the washing of some poor

prisoner. The walls on the other two sides were blank and had no windows.

The floor of this strange little courtyard was paved with cobble-stones covered with moss, and with weeds peering up between them, and the walls were green and slimy, and showed rusty and black stains where the rain had trickled down. But as the three boys stood in the opening looking out, they saw a sight that made them forget the courtyard altogether. For two great grey rats were crouched along by one wall, and as they heard the noise ran up into one corner and remained crouching there. Peter whispered at once that they should go and fetch the ladder of the loft, forgetting its weight, and the inconvenience of moving it. But William showed there was no need of a ladder, there being rude steps let into the wall from the window down into the courtyard, the distance being by no means great, yet great enough to prevent returning without the steps. Peter

was for starting at once, his stick between his teeth, had not the cautious William checked him. For the rat, he said, and truly, is a marvellous choleric and cruel beast, and pinned in a corner may easily injure a man by flying at his throat. So he said that they should first get boards from the loft to serve as shields, and then go down very warily. And he told our Little Boy to stay in the loft and see the sport in security. Sitting with his legs hanging over the edge, and holding on to the side, he watched them descend, and held his breath as they crept on tip-toe towards the corner where the rats lay crouching. For he could see the eye of one rat, and it looked wicked, and he feared that they might come by some great harm, admiring greatly the marvellous courage of Peter and William.

Then of a sudden came a whirring of sticks and a squeaking of rats, and the two were in the middle of the yard pounding

at something on the stones, and William crying to be mindful of injuring the skin. Directly after, Peter handed up a great grey body with the neck broken, and our Little Boy placed it by his side, looking with awe at the long, grinning teeth and the closed eyes. Great Peter, glorious slayer of rats! No hero riding to battle ever looked up into eyes more full of love and homage.

He shook his head when they asked him where the other went, and they turned again to look for it. He saw them go over to the other side of the yard and pause, and he thought they started. They stood staring at the ground, all their activity gone. He saw William shake his head to a question of Peter's, he saw Peter go down on both knees and bend over, and rise, rubbing the dirt from his hose, and say something to William. Then he made a noise with his feet against the wall, and Peter turned and beckoned to him to come, but without the

ghost of a smile, which was very unusual with Peter. Indeed, he thought he had never seen Peter look so grave before.

Without a moment's delay he scrambled down the wall and ran across the yard. Then he saw that where they were standing there was a hole in the ground dug down alongside the wall, but hidden from view from the loft by a buttress. William took him kindly by the shoulder and drew him to the edge, and he looked over.

It was not so deep as he thought, not more than about four feet from the surface; on the wall side at the bottom was a small window barred with iron. It was clear that the hole had been dug for the sake of this window.

There, at the bottom of the hole, lay the rat crouching. And close to the rat, thrust through the narrow bars, were two hands. That was what had made the two boys start and pause.

For they looked dreadful down there in

the pit, human hands thrust out from the very tomb, and the thought had come to the two that they were the hands of a dead man. But to our Little Boy, as he gazed down, there came a different thought, and he fancied that the hands were pleading for the rat that lay crouched and frightened so near them. For the palms were turned upward, and now and then the fingers curled and uncurled a little.

They were thin, brown hands, and the nails were long, and presently, when the rat, at a sound from above, moved a little nearer, they touched it, and touched it caressingly, the great grey rat with the sharp teeth, the horrid rat that gnawed the bones of the dead. And as if encouraged, the rat slipped along by the man's wrist, and disappeared into the prison. At that they ran away, William and brave Peter, carrying our Little Boy with them. They scrambled up the wall and bolted the door of the loft again, and hastened back to the

world of living men, trying to forget that living man buried alive who loved rats. But the man's hands were marvellous hard to forget, as Peter said, and William agreed.

CHAPTER II

ALL the rest of that day our Little Boy thought of the rat and the man's hands, and at night he dreamt about them. He dreamt that he was standing at the edge of the hole all alone, and there were the hands, very large and white, down at the bottom, and the rat crouched beside them. Then some one came from behind and made him go down into the hole, not suddenly, but very slowly, so that he had time to think. And the hole seemed very deep, and it took a long time to get to the bottom, and he wondered a little whether the rat would bite him, but still more what he would see through the grating, what the man's face would be like. But just as he got to the

bottom and was going to look through, there came a great flash of white light, and he was broad awake and heard Peter breathing deeply at his side. But he felt no inclination to awaken him, and lay quietly thinking of his dream until he fell asleep again and dreamt no more till morning.

But in the morning, directly he awoke, he thought of the hands again, and whenever he closed his eyes he could see them quite distinctly. This was new and interesting, for he had often before tried to make the things he had seen in dreams come again in the day-time, but never succeeded until now. But now he not only saw the hands, but after a time they began to move. He saw them always with the palms turned upwards, and now the fingers began to beckon to him, curling up slowly and then straightening out again, calling to him very distinctly. And he liked to see the beckoning hands, and whenever he

could that day he went away into one of his hiding-places, and shut his eyes and made them come again. And in the afternoon he determined to go and see the place and the hole in the little yard again. He was not afraid of the man in the pit, but he was a good deal of the rats, and would have liked to have Peter with him. But as he could not explain to Peter, he had to go alone and trust to a thick stick for protection. He was accustomed to go on messages into the Tower, and every one knew him well, so that he got into the loft and down into the courtyard without any difficulty; there were no rats to be seen, which comforted him greatly.

He went across the yard and looked down into the pit, but there were no hands there, and nothing to be seen at all except a bit of the grating. But as he stood disappointed, looking down, he heard the man in the pit singing. First he hummed a tune for a little while; and then he sang—

"Who lives for love, loves least to live,
And long delay doth rue,
If Him he loves by Whom he live,
To Whom all love is due."

He sang it in a clear voice, and it sounded now louder, now softer, as though he were walking briskly up and down in the cell. The tune was a very cheerful one, the song very pleasant and delectable, and he knelt down by the edge to hear more.

"Who for our love did choose to live,
And was content to die;
Who loved our love more than His life,
And love with life did buy."

This time it was sung quite close to the grating, and the hands came peering through again, the palms upwards as before, and again the fingers curled up and then straightened out. At this he determined to go down into the pit, for he saw that it could be done easily. He had only to hold on to the two sides and let himself down, and the depth was so little that when his feet were standing on the floor by the

grating, his head would be above the level of the yard.

So he first sat on the edge, and then very cautiously and slowly let himself down, keeping his eyes fixed all the while on the hands at the bottom. He thought that when his feet reached the level of the grating and became visible to the man, that he would call out to know his business there. This he dreaded, for not being able to answer, he must appear churlish. But his feet came before the grating and the man made no sign or sound, till they rested at last upon the bottom quite close to his hands, our Little Boy, with his head bent forward, watching eagerly to see what would happen. And presently he saw the hands turn over and stretch out towards his feet, and the string of one of his shoes being unfastened, a thing he had not noticed; the hands of the man tied it up. They did it so carefully and with such precision, pulling the strings tight, tying in a fanci-

ful bow, arranging and patting it into form, that he laughed silently to himself at seeing it, knowing that it was done playfully and kindly, and that the face he would presently see would be playful and kind. So without more ado he slipped down into the hole and crouched as near the grating as he could. But he found that the wall behind the grating was very thick, and that, peer as he might, he could not see the face.

Nevertheless the voice sounded quite close to his ear. "See, little brother," it said, "that for a first show of love and good-will." It was not sad in the least, or doleful as coming from the tomb, but rather full of mirth and great serenity.

Our Little Boy was grieved that he could not answer, and he pulled out in haste the card which he always carried, upon which Jane had written in a fine, clear hand, "Sir, I cannot speak at all, for I am dumb." And this he passed through the

bars to where the hands lay just beyond, for they had drawn back when he had come scrambling down. Then he began to cry, having a great desire to speak.

The man took the card and read it. "Nay, little brother," he said, "fall not a-weeping. An you cannot speak, so shall we be more quiet and loving together, far away from the tumult and hurly burly of busy prattlers." At this he thrust his hand again through the bars and laid it on his knee. And our Little Boy caught hold of the hand and began to stroke it, speaking in this way a language that Peter and Jane and his mother understood, and that he soon saw the man understood also.

"Let it not repent thee that it is thy hap to come to me," said the man gently, "for I am of the multitude of the poor and needy people, whom only to visit is to grant them great felicity. And I will tell thee stories of the King, my Master, to give thee mirth and recreation, of my King of Whom,

doubtless, you heard me singing but a little while ago, and Whose very Name is to me so dear and delectable as to be a gaol-delivery from all evils."

Our Little Boy snuggled down close to the bars, still holding the man's hand. And, loving stories above all things, he showed his pleasure better by that movement than by many words.

"And I will tell thee of myself," continued the man, "by making a similitude or comparison, and how the bitter sop of most hard choice hath cast me in this place, and being here and suffering many discommodities my heart is glad and merry none the less, desiring not at all to be removed therefrom.

"Of my King and His worthy valiant deeds I would fain speak as I might, of His reign and dominion above all the Princes of the World, so that before Him they have but a vain name only and a superficial glory; of His power and swift-

ness, so that no man could ever cast Him that would try masteries with Him for strength and nimbleness. And yet withal a marvellous lowly and gentle person, offering no creature hurt or violence, but rather loving all, so that all seeing Him desire wondrously that they may have the good hap to be of the number of His friends, and being of His fellowship the desire to win more dieth straight in them, but only to win more love. And think not, little child, that He is the enemy of any king or sovereign prince, for His kingdom is not of this world, as He Himself hath said."

At this our Little Boy was mightily relieved, for he had feared for a moment that the King might be the wicked King of Spain.

"And on a time," continued the man, "there arose an enemy in the land against my King, a stout man, one wholly given over to things wicked and unlawful. And

being set on a broil, and a bravery, and unwilling to abase his haughty and fierce mind, he did labour painfully to sow in the hearts of the people the naughty seed and cockle of insolency and sedition. And he gave himself in his words to thunder, and under fair seeming names did cloak and colour the most unnatural fact that might be. And many, being seduced, followed after him, and without just matter of complaint forsook their good Lord, Who did so lovingly and courteously receive them."

Our Little Boy patted the man's hand at that, for he felt that it was a great sorrow to him.

"Then was my King sore grieved, and took thought how He might quell this riotous business, and bring back peace and amity once more. And He gave it out that all who would follow Him to the wars and be partakers of His jeopardy and pain, should be for ever of His fellowship and partakers also of His joy and prosperity.

And whatsoever hardships they suffered, He also would suffer and be at hand to help them. And many, being moved by this honourable offer, did forthwith come and enter their names in the muster-master's book to go to the wars. And I myself, being yet but a scantling, had tidings of His offer, and did enter among them, desiring to have a share in that good quarrel.

"And all hath been fulfilled according to His promise, as He said, and oftentimes when wearied with the great pain and surrounded by enemies, I have felt Him near and known that He, too, hath suffered like things, and felt my heart made strong. For His soldiers, who sleep by the camp-fires, nipped by the bitter winds, wake often when the night is darkest and the wind most bitter, and behold Him bending over them, wounded like them, and poor and cold like them. And in this cell in which you find me, to which the following of Him hath brought

me, He oftentimes ministereth unto me, passing through bolts and bars, and healeth me of my wound. For with His wounded hands He healeth our wounds, and in His stripes we are made whole."

At this our Little Boy leant forward and tried again to see down the grating into the cell, but failing to do so he stroked the man's hand again.

"And it is for this," continued the man, "that I am merry in this cell, and love it and all things therein for His sake. For as His Presence is life, mirth, beauty and all delight and honour, so in His absence only is there death, sadness, loathsomeness and all torment and shame unto it. And though haply so long as I live I be unto Him obedient, and suffer for His sake all asperity and terrible things, shall my work therefore, for all that, be equal to the prize which He hath prepared for me?"

When he had said this the man held his peace for a good while, and our Little Boy,

thinking that he would say no more, laid his hand down and was prepared to climb out again.

"Farewell, little brother," said the man, "and be of good cheer, for my King loveth all such as are pitiful and kind of heart, and visit His folk in their necessity."

And "Oh, sir, that He would heal me also of mine infirmity!" it was in his mind to say, but by reason of that same infirmity he could not do it. In silence, and being very loath to go away, he returned again to the world of living men.

But he thought none the less very constantly of the man and of his story. And he desired that the time of going to bed might come quickly, so that he could go over it all again and picture it to himself undisturbed.

CHAPTER III

"FOUR corners to my bed," said Peter, standing in his shirt; "four angels round my head; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, bless the bed that I lie on." Then he lay down and went to sleep, our Little Boy beside him. He considered with delight that there was the whole long night to think in, and, therefore, no need to hurry. And he lay very still, and when he heard Peter breathing long and deeply, he began to make pictures of the man's story. He had often made pictures before, but these were the best and most complete he had ever known. Often before, while he was doing one part of the picture the other part had faded away, so that he saw legs and feet

without faces, or faces without legs and feet. But these pictures were complete, and lasted, and came with so little effort that they seemed to make themselves. First he saw the city over which the King ruled, a beautiful city, like London on a summer's evening seen from the Tower walls, when the church spires were all golden and the river a grand deep blue. And the King went through the city on a white horse, that bowed its great, white, humble head, and seemed to consider the ground. The people of the city came out as He went along, speaking nothing, but only opening their arms wide and gazing at Him.

Then he saw the enemy of the King, a stout man dressed in red, drinking wine with his fellows in a tavern, and by his words stirring them up to be seditious. And they ran through the city in and out, appearing and disappearing like red rats. And wherever they went they sowed the seed of sedition. And the seed of sedition

was blackish, and to look at very much like a pea that has gone mouldy.

Then came the riot, the fruit of their evil sowing, and the bells of the city crashed wildly as he had heard them once when there was an affray among the apprentices. He saw everywhere the followers of the stout man gathering, dressed all in red like him, and their faces red with anger, and their teeth white in their red faces, and long, like the teeth of a rat. Then in another place, very like the Square by Paul's Cross, only more beautiful, and from a pulpit very like the famous pulpit at Paul's, he saw the King making His honourable offer, the muster-master with a big book standing at his side. He saw the people come up in great numbers and enter their names in the book to go to the war, and the King thanking all with great benignity and wondrous humility. Then the scene shifted out into a wild country where the war was raging; it was night

and very cold, and the followers of the King lay sleeping by the watch-fires. Great gusts of wind blew over them, lifting the coverings in which they sought to wrap themselves, and pouring thick smoke and sparks upon them, so that they moaned and turned about in great uneasiness. And as he watched, came the King silently and stood among them. This was the picture that pleased him most of all, and he tried to put himself into the picture and lie down beside the wounded men. For he saw that as the King drew near He spread out His hands over them and healed them, they lying warm and still, for the wind had ceased to blow.

It was only a picture and not a reality, yet he really opened his mouth and pointed to his tongue to show where his trouble lay, that in fancy he might seem to be healed. And for a moment the King's hands seemed to come quite close to him, but without touching, and they were

swollen and wounded, and round each wrist a great scar, red and blue, not beautiful at all or like the hands of a king, yet they were the hands that touched the men and made them whole. And considering this marvel he went to sleep, for even when they come easily, the process of making pictures is very tiring.

In the morning he thought of it all again, and tried eagerly to see whether, as the day before, he could make the hands come by shutting his eyes. And to his great delight they came, but not the man's hands. The hands he saw now were the puffed and swollen hands with the blue mark, not the man's hands but the King's hands. And after a time they, too, began to move, as on the day before, and to beckon, though not quite in the same way. For the fingers, being swollen and stiff, would not bend; but the whole hand beckoned. At seeing this he was filled with great joy, for he remembered what the man

had said about the King, and that He was pleased when any visited His followers in prison. And he thought that if he had the good fortune to go there when the King was present with the man in the cell, He might stretch forth His hand and perhaps heal him also. He thought about it a great deal all that day, and in the afternoon went, full of hope, to the little yard, and clambered as usual down the wall, without any thought of rats and without any stick, and walked across quickly to the hole and looked down.

There were the hands, and, sure enough, they were the hands he had been seeing; not the man's hands, but the King's hands, not thin and brown, but puffed and swollen, and with the blue mark round the wrists.

"Ah, what a marvellous good fortune," thought our Little Boy, as he prepared very carefully to let himself down, for he made no doubt whatever it was the King. He

took great care not to touch the hands as he climbed down, for he knew that they must be tender and sore. In a moment he was beside them, crouching down in the hole, but they made no movement, and no cheerful voice called to him from the cell. Still he knew that the man must be inside, and was perhaps whispering to the King, and perhaps telling Him of his visit yesterday. He peered anxiously down the hole beyond the iron bars, but could see nothing in the gloom.

He waited anxiously for something to happen, gazing with awe at the Wounded Hands, seeing how terrible were the wounds on the wrists, raw and open so that every movement must be pain.

Then a passionate longing came into his heart to touch the hands. And, "Oh, sir, that I may speak with my tongue," the soul within him cried; and he stooped and kissed the hands, and knew forthwith that his prayer had been answered.

Full of fear he knew that he could speak, and with his eyes fixed on the hands, that never moved or gave any response at all, he spoke these, his first words—

"Sir, that I may see your Face."

Then he looked again through the grating and was happy, for he felt that the King had gazed back into his eyes.

"Sir, I thank you right heartily," he said, and remained sitting there a long time, full of a strange happiness and peace, the like of which he had never known before. And from time to time he stroked the King's hands, which all the while never moved, and said again and again, "Sir, I thank you right heartily. Sir, I thank you as much as ever I can."

The hours passed by and he grew cramped and stiff, and still he sat there very loath to go away. For it was true what the man said, that in His Presence was life, mirth, beauty, and all delight and honour, and he felt that the world outside

without Him would be indeed sadness and loathsomeness.

Nevertheless, at last he had to go away, though full of grief at the thought of going. So he kissed the hands again that all the while had never moved, and as he kissed them he whispered yet another prayer—

"Sir, I pray you make me of your fellowship."

CHAPTER IV

THEY all noticed that there was something strange about our Little Boy that night, for though he did not speak, being afraid, his eyes sparkled and he kept moving about all the time and could not rest quiet. His mother, who had the thought of his infirmity always before her, called him to her presently and held him in front of her as she had so often done before, and began to form words with her mouth very slowly. "Little one, say mother—mother," she said, and he, looking up into her eyes for a minute, spoke the word quite clearly. "Mother!" he cried, "mother, mother!" and then ran into her arms for joy.

Then came in at her summons his father,

"Tie up the Man's Hands." [p. 60

the Clerk, to hear the marvel, and stood with his long beard and solemn face looking down at our Little Boy. And he, too, was presently moved to tears, and walked up and down the room carrying him in his arms. "For this my son was dead and is alive again," he said, being never at a loss for a verse of Holy Scripture; "he was lost and is found."

Then came in Peter and Jane, and he spake their names with great joy. And they stood looking on with eyes full of wonder. Jane cried like her mother, and Peter whistled a tune. That night at prayer-time the Clerk read in a loud, sonorous voice the Te Deum, out of the Queen's new prayer-book. "We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord." Peter carried him up to bed that night, not that it was at all necessary, but that he wanted to do something unusual. And when they were alone, Peter cried too, holding him on his knee and

making him say in turn the names of all the things in the room. He tried to tell Peter how it had happened, and of the man in the pit and of the King with the wounded hands. But when he found that the story troubled Peter, who indeed feared for the moment that with the power of speech his little brother's wits were going, he desisted. None the less, when at last Peter was asleep he lay thinking of the King, and of the joy he had felt crouched down there in the hole, repeating many times in a soft whisper the prayer that he might be of His fellowship.

In the morning he found himself of a sudden a public character, and must sit in the kitchen all day while his mother brought in the neighbours to hear him speak. And the fame of the matter spreading, others of greater importance came to see him—the parson, who made him repeat the Lord's prayer, and saw in the matter a clear proof that the Queen's religion was

acceptable to Heaven—the school-master, who made him say "hic, hæc, hoc," and promised to make him hereafter a great Clerk. But these attentions weighed little with our Little Boy beside the fact that because of them he could not that day visit the man in the pit, a thing he desired to do with his whole heart.

Indeed, it was several days before he was able to go there, for when the neighbours ceased to come, his mother took to leading him about, visiting friends in the city and stopping every chance acquaintance to make known the marvel to them. And all this time he never told the real story to any one, being warned by his experience with Peter, and sure that, try as he might, he could not make them understand. But at last came a day when, the marvel having somewhat lost its strangeness, he found himself alone and free to follow the desire of his heart.

He heard no sound as he entered the

courtyard, all was as still as the grave, and the silence troubled him, for he feared that this wonderful man might during these days have been moved to another prison. No hands could be seen through the grating, but as he stood anxiously listening at the edge of the pit he heard a hissing sound, such as men make when they draw in their breath through their teeth. It lasted a long time, as long as it took to count ten slowly, and when it was over he scrambled down at once into the hole.

"Sir, I have seen the King, and He hath healed me and I speak," he cried through the bars. "Sir, I would be of His fellowship for ever."

"Amen to that, little brother," said the voice from the gloom, but it sounded differently to last time and very weary. "Amen to that," it said, "Amen to that." Then there was a long silence, and our Little Boy began to feel sad, for he had thought the man would be glad with him

and rejoice that the King had healed him, and now he seemed too weary to be glad.

"Sir, I found Him with His hands thrust through the bars, and I knew them by the marks and the scars thereon, and stooping down I kissed them, and of His courtesy He healed me. Sir, give me tidings of His fellowship, that I may be of His company for ever."

He saw of a sudden two white things appear at the bars, and they were the man's hands, swathed all in linen bands, so that they had no shape at all, and so big and swollen were they that they could not come through the bars any more. Our Little Boy cried out when he saw them, and was very sorry. "Ah, sir, hath He not healed thee too?" he said.

The man made no answer for a moment, and the white, pudding-like things trembled up and down.

"Ah, little brother," he said at last, "said I not He was a kind and loving

Lord?" He paused between the words as though it troubled him to speak.

Our Little Boy grew sadder still at this. And, "Oh, sir, why hath He not healed thee too?" he asked again. But again the man made no answer, and his hands were withdrawn so that he could not see them any more. And again there was a long, strange silence.

Then the man spoke, but it seemed that he was speaking not to our Little Boy or to any one in particular, but to all the world and to himself. He spoke of the omnipotency of God, of His wonderful works, and of the vain imaginings of men.

"For many times we think we hear what we do not hear," he said, "and we imagine that we see what we do not see. Yet, notwithstanding, such as are godly bent and zealously given to think on heavenly things, so as they can no way be drawn from believing that which is spoken of them, they have this, the following reason, to

ground the foundation of their belief upon—

"That is, the Omnipotency of God, which is wonderful, and hath no manner of resemblance or likeliness of proportion unto ours, but is altogether contrary as touching our nature, our moving, our art and our force.

"And, therefore, if He do anything impossible to us, or do bring forth and devise things without man's common reach and understanding, we must not, therefore, think it impossible at all.

"For if in other things He is far contrary to us, much more in His works and secret operations He far surpasseth all the rest; but the most part of God's doings for lack of faith are hidden and unknown to us."

He paused between each sentence as he spoke, and he paused again at the end,

and was silent for a little while. Our Little Boy, although he did not understand all he said, was filled none the less with awe, and, puzzled and bewildered, knew that God had cured him and that the man was a friend of God. It was a new view of the matter and hard to understand, and he sat considering it in silence, until at last the man spoke again.

"Little brother," he said, "it may be we shall meet no more, for to-morrow they take me hence to another place, and from there I go to meet my Lord, and to be with Him, as I trust, for ever, and taste with Him a joy unspeakable and glorified. But thou, do thou always pray to be of His fellowship, and I also will ask it of Him, and doubt not at all but that it shall be granted. This, then, as a last show and proof of love to thee, my desire that thou pray always to be of His true fellowship."

Our Little Boy began to cry when he heard that he should see the man no more,

and the man's hands came again near to the bars and made as though they would come through.

"Nay, grieve not, little one," he said, "but rather rejoice with me that the end of my tribulation is at hand, and there remaineth then a rest unto the people of God."

"Sir, of your courtesy, tell me your name, if you please, and the name of the place to which you go," he said, thinking that if he knew he might perhaps find him out again.

And the man told his name; a name we hold now in reverence as that of a Martyr of the Church of God, a name honoured of all men as that of an excellent poet in our language, yet the name, by the law of that age, of an outlaw and a felon.

Still crying, and very sad at heart, our Little Boy went away for the last time.

They met once more, but it was in the

open daylight. The men-at-arms were taking a batch of prisoners from the Tower to the Gate-house Prison, and Father Southwell was among them. By the help of William, the Warder's son, our Little Boy got into the courtyard where they waited before starting, and William pointed out Southwell, the Romanist and Jesuit Priest. Then for the first time he saw the man's face, that face drawn and lined, which still looks out at us from his portrait, the face surely of a man who desired a thing with a passionate desire, and found it withheld from him. Pain, and the terrible anguish of soul and body through which he had passed, had made all about him ugly and almost monstrous; except only his eyes. From out the twisted mask of face his eyes looked gently and bravely still upon the world that had shown itself so hard to him.

When our Little Boy first caught sight of him, bent and distorted, and with his hands swathed in bandages, he felt only

horror and repulsion against the ugly, twisted thing. But when presently the man raised his face to look at the swallows wheeling high up round the summit of the Tower, our Little Boy had a sight of his eyes, and without a thought of the consequence, he broke through the line of the men-at-arms, and ran across the square and knelt down before the prisoner, catching hold of his torn, dirty gown and kissing it again and again, for he knew then that it was really the man, his own dear friend.

The eyes were quite close to him now; in his long years of silence he had grown skilled in the language of eyes; these were the eyes of one for whom the world of things is at last no more than a curtain, and a curtain already trembling before it is raised.

The Little Boy felt the mystery, and did not even desire that they should smile at him.

"Remember, little brother, and I, too, will remember," said the man gently, and raised his hand and made the Sign over him.

Up came the officer of the guard at this, purple with indignation.

"Ho! Where did the little recusant come from?" he roared, seizing him by the shoulder.

"No recusant, an it please your honour," said one of the soldiers, "but an honest man's son, and known to all of us."

"Take him away," said the officer, "and look to it that he hath a good whipping to teach him better loyalty."

Then he turned to the Prisoner.

"Tie up the Man's Hands," he said.

THE WHITE ROAD

THE WHITE ROAD

CHAPTER I

". . . Not to souls unshriven
But whoso in his life has striven
To love things holy and be true."
Euripides.

ON the old road, long since abandoned, which led from Torres Vedras to the capital, there was a point at which a view of the sea broke in upon the traveller with an almost furious insistence. It was as though the Atlantic, of a sudden, took his face between great hands and forced him to gaze into the deep blue of her eyes. For the road, which for miles wandered through hills as brown as the faces of the country people, suddenly thrust upwards, and entering upon a gorge

found the sea as a great plain far below, boldly framed in rigid lines of rock. For the space of a quarter of a mile the traveller must walk with the eyes of the sea full upon him, and all nature crying parables if he had ears to hear. It was one who had heard, I take it, who placed at the end of the gorge, so that from a distance it seemed to stand in the middle of the road, a great crucifix of wood. All but the stump of it has disappeared, but for centuries it stood, black, and, as it were, suspended, a pectoral cross on the broad bosom of the waters; those wide waters which sometimes lay at peace, like a child breathing sunlight, or, livid and flecked with foam, drew a terrible line of fate across the horizon.

So wonderful was the place, and so mesmeric the gaze of the sea, that in the days when such things were rife, the fear of thieves and the dread of sudden death departed from the traveller as he entered it —departed like evil angels unable to bear

The White Road.

the presence of divinity. For, great even now in its abandonment, the place was greatest when from the depths of the Atlantic a new and enchanted world had risen for the men of Europe when the ocean, which had for so long been ultimate, became transformed into a wizard's sea, and such look-out posts as these were in very truth those magic casements of which the poet of our own race has sung.

Thus it does not surprise me that in the life of Stephen Zuraire this gorge, with the crucifix and the sea, played a determining part. The father of Stephen, a prosperous farmer of the hamlet of Los Angelos, used to send his produce to market by this very road of the gorge; and to Stephen, from his earliest years, it was the way that led into the world, that led from the quiet, clean, hard-working life of the farm into bustling, holiday-making Lisbon. When very small he used to go to market with his parents, seated, a little nut-brown and vermilion

god of the country, between the fruit-laden panniers of the mules, and at Lisbon spent the day under the stall in the market square, watching the legs of the customers, the buckles of their shoes, their beautiful variegated stockings, the ends of their velvet scabbards which waggled to and fro as they bargained. The scabbards, in particular, fascinated Stephen. He would sometimes touch them lovingly, with a podgy, daring finger, until one day, as though he had pressed a magic spring, the curtain in front of the stall whisked up, and there was a fierce, moustachioed face glaring down at him, and crying, "Ha! ha! little one, what have we here?" Stephen howled and rolled over to the other side, and was snatched up and well shaken for his daring.

Even in these early years the gorge had its peculiar fascination for the child, for he used to notice how his mother, who unti they entered it had been talking and laugh

ing, grew suddenly silent, and went gazing with her great black eyes out to sea. Even when he called her and pulled her cloak she did not, as generally, look down and smile at him, but only stroked his head, and remained gazing out with no laughter in her eyes. Stephen felt sure that she saw something, and that when she knelt before the crucifix at the end it was not at the terrible stark figure of wood that she looked, but at the something beyond. It might be our Lord Himself that she saw, white and great, rising from the sea, or Madonna Mary, or perhaps an angel. Stephen never asked, feeling that the matter was sacred, but used to screw up his eyes and try to see for himself. And sometimes he fancied he caught a glimpse of a great wing just vanishing in cloud, but was never quite satisfied, having a very practical mind.

Reverence was throughout his life a characteristic of Stephen Zuraire, and it

was doubtless born of the great love and reverence with which as a boy he followed this wonderful wise mother of his. For him she gave a meaning to things; the goats were there to be milked by her, and the grapes hung in clusters that she might pick them. Indeed, when he was very little, since he knew that she was always praying, he thought that the good things of the earth were God's answers to her prayers, the rich yellow cream formed on the milk at her petition, the plump figs, and the green olives, and the purple grapes came on the trees because she asked for them. To the end of his life he could never pass through a vineyard without sadness, for of all things after she had gone the leaves and fruit of the vine recalled her presence most vividly; the moist, fragrant leaves that were like her caress, and the grapes of which she spoke so wisely, telling of the mystery of wine by which they become the Blood of God. At these times,

as so often, he would feel with awe that she saw things in the world about that were hidden from him, and he became dimly aware of a sacrificial presence brooding over the earth; learning to approach with veiled head and fearfully that Mystery of the Incarnation of which in those days as in ours the multitude of men so glibly cavilled.

It was perhaps because he had learnt in his childhood to think of Christ our Lord as One of whom much might be known from the broad spaces of the sky, and the fields and rivers, that as he grew to boyhood, the gorge on the road to Lisbon became more than ever a religious place to him. If he were alone he would remove his hat on entering, and whether alone or in company he never passed the crucifix at the end without dismounting and praying before it. These prayers of his were in no sense mystical and a cry for light, the glimpses he had through his mother of the flaming mountain peaks of existence had

aroused in him as yet no longing to scale them, no desire for a rarer spiritual air. His prayers were of a simple agricultural and commercial character—as, that he might get a good price for his butter, that the sick ox might not die, sometimes—though with no great heart, and to satisfy convention—that he might be a better boy. For if he wanted to be wise in the things of the spirit (though to him at this period the expression would have been quite foreign) he knew the way perfectly well; there must be sleeping on the ground, and scourges, and hair-shirts, and a diet of bread and water; there was no more need for prayer than for knowledge of the road to Lisbon. But none of these practices commended themselves to Stephen, who ate and slept as honestly as he worked, who was rapidly becoming a good farmer, a shrewd and efficient salesman.

The angel who came from God to Stephen to tell him that this honest, kindly

road through life on which he had contentedly started was not to be his to the end, was the terrible messenger, the Angel of Death, who, when his cruel work is done, is generally found to have left some message behind him. He came in this case swiftly and so mercifully; he came like a sudden storm which hardly leaves room for fear before it has done its worst. There was one tense night of agony, and the angel was gone and back in the sky again, and the world as cold and grey to Stephen as the face of his dead mother. Very early in the morning when they told him there was no hope, he went out into the vineyard and with a chain beat his shoulders till they bled, crying dumbly to God, thinking, as so many have done, that the angel was no angel, but an evil spirit to be exorcised by prayer and fasting. And when he came back she was dead.

And with her the old life had died too, as he found with a strange surprise. The

road which had seemed to stretch before him with such peaceful assurance through long, sober years of toil, through marriage on with honour to old age, became of a sudden impossible, a place without water where the soul would die. This was the first part of the angel's message, the first thing Stephen saw through the mist of tears which is so great a strengthener of vision in matters of the spirit.

The second part came as they were bearing her to the grave, bearing her, with yellow candles and a little crucifix, down that very road of the gorge, to be buried in a churchyard in the valley. The feet of the mourners stirred up clouds of dust as they went, the women were crying and wailing, and Stephen, fascinated by the swaying of the dreadful, flat thing on the bearers' shoulders, walked behind with his father, grave and recollected as the fashion of the day required. And as they entered the gorge the message came, and he saw

quite clearly that the wonderful familiar scene was a parable of his mother's life and of all life; that life was a little thing that looked big until one looked at the bigness beyond; that the immensity before him with the cross on its breast, the sky and the summer sea, stood in the parable not for a dumb immensity of space, but for a greatness of a soul, the soul of Christ our Lord. All this came to him not as the fruit of frigid reasoning but with the trumpet blare of a revelation. It was as though he had discovered that the scars and weather marks upon the rocks were the hieroglyphics of some lost, mysterious language which he had been given the power to read. The funeral pageant lost its desolation for him; it was a glorious thing they were doing, bearing her body to the sea whose soul had gone to the great God. It was all so real, he was so lost in the parable, the sea and sky seemed so personal and full of love, that it seemed the end must be, not the

dark grave and the rattle of earth on the coffin, but some one coming out from the whiteness to take their burden from the weary men, to carry it down that long, white, glistening sea road into the west. Only when they had reached the end of the gorge and turned away from the sea did the vision fade, but it mattered little what they did with her body, he knew that her soul had gone down the White Road to God.

He had a way of thinking of her for the future. Her grey face swathed in bandages ceased to follow him, ceased to peer out at him piteously from among the vine trees, or to wait for him to wake in the midnight and find it by his bed. He thought instead, of a long trail of light stretching away over the still sea, mile after mile, reach upon reach, until it vanished in the silver horizon, and then he thought of her passing down it to the west, sometimes as a flash of light, sometimes slowly and majestically robed in brightness, in triumph

always, never as labouring or in pain. In this thought and picture of a road he could find comfort even in the darkest hours, even at those terrible times when he came suddenly upon things that had belonged to her, and the wound in his heart burst open and bled afresh. And when he could go down to the gorge and sit by the crucifix gazing out to sea, the vastness and the silence filled his soul with a peace of which he had never before tasted, and filled him too with a strange longing to follow her down the White Road, a longing which made him in silence stretch out yearning arms to the west and envy in a way the men in the ships far below, little curled feathers as they seemed. For though reason said the thing was foolish and made him ashamed of it, the feeling remained and was part of his consolation, that if he could pass over the great waters he would be nearer to her and to God.

This idea grew as time passed, and be-

came a burden to him. It was as though he were forced to listen to one of whom he could not be sure whether he were madman or prophet, a man speaking foolishness with an earnest face. For the world beyond the waters, as he had heard it described at market and in gatherings of the country people, was a place where men of war performed incredible feats of arms, and where gold grew in a manner terrible to contemplate. It was fit and proper for men who desired such things to seek them in the new world, but for those who desired God and His Kingdom it was surely the strangest folly. And yet when he went down to the gorge and looked out, the waters called him as clearly as though their waves in the west were indeed of the molten gold they seemed, and went brimming and rolling in full flood, to break at last in glory on the steps of the throne of God.

It was the fact of this strange obsession, this foolish thought claiming to be wise,

that made the meeting of Stephen with the strange priest an event so momentous in his life. Years had passed since his mother died, and he was at the time a young man, tall and broad-shouldered, courteous in his bearing to all, and in the hamlet regarded as devout. Not a few mothers of the village looked at Stephen hopefully, looked at his upright figure and into his honest eyes with the thought that it were well for their daughters to be protected by such a man. But for Stephen the thought of all such things was blotted out by the vision of the White Road. While others of his age dreamt of the good human matters of love and marriage, Stephen dreamt of a long trail of light on the vast waters that lost itself in immensity; while others watched the sunset two by two and praised God in company, Stephen watched it from beside the crucifix in the gorge, and praised Him all alone.

It was on such an occasion that he met

the strange priest. As he entered the gorge he saw him in the distance kneeling before the cross and seeming part of it, the strong yellow light which streamed over land and sea merged them both in the same violet shadow. It was a sunset without variation of colour, a strong glare growing more and more mellow, leaving, when the sun had sunk, a glory of pure light in the sky. And the crucifix and the man before it seemed one thing. That was what Stephen noticed as he came slowly up the gorge, his long shadow streaming fantastically behind him.

The stranger rose as he drew near, and, as he turned, the sun caught his face and transfigured it so strangely that Stephen involuntarily started. For it suggested the thought that the man was on fire, the face was so very white and every line and wrinkle upon it stood revealed in the glare as though the light came from within instead of from without.

He stood looking at Stephen, his lips moving as though he had some psalm of the Office to finish, and Stephen, seeing that he was a priest, waited reverently.

"The mercy of God is over all the earth this night," he said at last, with a great sigh of utter contentment that seemed part of the great peace of the evening. And as he gazed round at land and sea and sky Stephen saw come into his eyes that same look he had seen in his mother's, and felt the same awe as when he was a little boy. And by the thought of his mother he was filled with a great confidence in this strange priest, and a desire to tell him of his way of life, and in especial of the calling of the waters and of the thought of the White Road. For as he stood there he felt the call in his soul more strong and insistent than ever.

So he told him, as well as he could, the whole matter, sitting by his side, and facing the luminous west. And he felt as he went

on that this was the right thing to do, and that he would presently get an answer to his perplexities.

"I am no interpreter of dreams," said the priest slowly, when at length he had made an end of his story, "yet this your dream I think I can interpret. For 'He calleth His sheep by name,' as St. John saith, and you are not the first in these days of ours to whom His voice has come as a loud cry from over the sea. For the real wonder of this new land of which we hear so much is not the treasure men seek there, but rather that in its great forests Christ our Lord is crucified, and by men who know Him not. And there are many, I say, besides yourself, who have heard the voice of His piteous love calling to them from the wild skies of the west. Ah, many hear it, and men are banding together to go forth in His Name, to pour balm as it were into His sacred Wounds. The ships that go out to the west bear other

seekers after gold than those you speak of, the merchants and the soldiers; there are those that seek the gold that can purchase joy in the Heart of Christ our Lord. And that gold is found only in the souls of men, those strong coffers bound about with iron, of which God holds the key; and so precious is it that all we can give is but little in return for one single grain. I myself am a member of such a company of seekers, and do you pray for us that our search be not in vain, that at the end of our labours there may be a little store wherewith to make glad the Heart of our loving Lord."

It was the priest who spoke, but it seemed to Stephen that the sea and the sky had a voice and spoke with him. He had his answer, and the matter now seemed clear enough. For a moment, but a moment he never forgot, he had a vision that came up from the sea like music, the vision of a love passing the love of women, a passion be-

fore whose face the heavens and the earth would flee away. Then he knelt for the priest's blessing before they parted, and he had one question more to ask.

"Father," he said, "the name of the company of seekers?"

The priest looked down upon him with his strange white face, and smiled.

"The name?" he said. "Why, it is called by a great name. It is called the Company of Jesus."

CHAPTER II

"And stepping heavenward seemed to be
A kind of heavenly destiny."

Wordsworth.

AFTER this meeting with the strange priest the time of uncertainty for Stephen was at an end. He felt like a man who, half asleep, has listened for long in the night-time to strange sounds and mutterings about his house, not knowing whether they be real or fancied, and wakes with a start to find them part of a tempest before which his house is falling, before which he himself must fly from shelter into the wilds. The White Road he knew now to be indeed a road, a place where the spirit could travel: for both body and soul the way of his life lay westward. And the voice was indeed a voice, and for

him as for all others who hear it, nothing remained but to leave all and follow, though in following he must walk, like Peter, upon the waters. And as though to confirm his resolution, circumstances so shaped themselves for him as to make the task of following easy and natural. For his father, who was still in his prime, took to himself another wife, and Stephen's presence at the farm was no longer necessary. So with a great heart he said farewell and passed one morning for the last time down the road of the gorge. And at Lisbon he found easy admittance into the noviceship of the Company, already a large place, and there, as a lay-brother and assistant to the cook, he found the prosaic end to the first stage of the journey.

It was the time when the Church was awakening from the sleep into which the opiate drug of prosperity had cast her, awakening as one who has lain down among loving friends and children, lulled

by soft voices, guarded by strong arms, soothed by a thousand filial professions, and awakes to find all these departed and instead fierce enemies and daggers raised to strike. New blood was coursing in the old veins of Catholicism, new words of prayer and supplication were forming on the old lips, a very tempest of pity and anger swelled in the heart that men thought shrivelled and dead. Into the midst of this wonderful movement Stephen now found himself suddenly plunged; his teachers and companions were the men who fanned its quickening breath, the followers of that fierce Spaniard whose fervid soul had done so much to enkindle it. He found himself among men who had set out to scale the mountain of God, not blindly or in haste, but warily and with science, like a company of Alpine climbers.

In the beginning it was a sore trial to him to learn that he must leave the matter of his journeying to the determination of

others, that he must submit, if need be, to pass long years of toil in the hot kitchen at Lisbon and perhaps rest at last untravelled in the graveyard in the corner of the garden. Stephen's face grew thin and sharp, and his jaw hard and rigid, as the tedium of the life began to tell upon him, as one after another the days dawned dark and colourless, leaden beads hiding the thread of gold. He longed for the country and its great airs, for the homely sights and sounds of the farm, for the life of the village, its gossip and kindly laughter. And this longing, so pitifully human and innocent, he must stifle and kill as traitorous and unholy. And after all, it might be, he would never travel the White Road, never get beyond the kitchen at Lisbon.

Yet all the while, guided by wise men, he was climbing up the mountain of God, finding at every step the world below grow smaller and smaller. Yet even this progress was not unattended with trial, for he

soon became possessed with an apostolical desire to go back and tell the people below how small they were, how insignificant their cities, over what petty concerns their trafficking. He longed to go with a great voice and bid them lift up their eyes to the mountains where lay the footprints of the feet of Christ. Yet when, in a humble way, this work was given him, and he was sent to teach the catechism to children and poor people, though his heart was burning the words came very slowly, and he found that the boys on the back benches were cracking nuts.

Altogether these early days were a time of gloom and disappointment, yet they had their consolation. For the house of the Company in Lisbon stood high (it had once been the palace of a great noble of Portugal), and behind the house was a garden, and from one spot in the garden a distant view of the sea. Over a wall of foliage, green and bronze, a thin strip could be seen a

long way off, but enough to show the trail of the White Road, brimming there, enough to keep alive the wonder and the longing in his heart. And it was here that one evening in summer, when the sky was a blazing glory through which it seemed angels descended and churned the sea to fire above the line of black trees, that he learnt more of the meaning of the road and of the journey upon which he had started.

He was feeling a traveller and at peace, as he always did when in presence of the sea, when the Master of Novices came up to him, and with him one of the novices. Stephen was always fond of the novices, because their souls were white and full of fire, and fire and whiteness were the things he loved beyond all others for the sake of the road. In the kitchen Stephen had been given charge of the novices when they came to work there, for the Fathers had soon learnt that he was strong and patient and could be trusted. And in this particular

novice he had a special interest, because he had failed once very badly when trying to preach a sermon before the whole community. Some had been rather hard upon him and prophesied ill of his future, but not so Stephen, who remembered his own desolating discovery of nutshells.

"Here is this Brother of ours," said the Master to Stephen jestingly, "who tells me he wants a voice like the sunset and like the thunder and like clouds driven across the sky wherewith to preach the gospel. Brother, what shall we say to such ambition?"

Stephen smiled gravely at the Master and at the novice beside him.

"Let him pray for such a voice, Reverend Father," he answered, after a pause. "God, who has given it to others, may give it to him also."

"And to whom has God given it?" asked the Master, a wise man and a seeker after wisdom.

Stephen looked up to the line of f
above the trees where the angels were dar
ing, and saw the answer there quite plain
and saw that words had been given h
beyond his understanding.

"Ah, surely the martyrs of God had th
voice," he said, seeing the thing so clea
that he felt impatient.

The novice looked at him with big ey
of admiration. "Father," he said,
aglow with joy, "you told me just n
that to spend a life teaching boys th
grammar, or to spend it cutting up onic
in the kitchen, was a better way to prea
Christ our Lord than to cry to the wo
of Him with a voice like thunder. But
not this the best way of all? It is go
to teach boys, and it is good to cut
onions for Christ's sake, but I think it
better still to die for Him, and to speak
Him to men in our blood."

The Master, too, was now looking at t
gold line above the trees. "That also

good, and the greatest of all," he said, "yet that too is insufficient. For it is part of our trial here that we are given to know more than we can ever find means to utter. Christ, our most Blessed Master, taught and preached, and in the end He died upon the cross. Yet, even dying, he could not utter all, but left it to His Holy One to teach us. Yet when the voices of all who have striven to speak the unspeakable word come together, the voice of the martyrs is the greatest voice and rings the loudest and truest. Blessed and thrice blessed are they to whom God gives the grace to utter it."

Three of them stood there, and two of them knew with a sudden illumination that that gift was to be theirs. And Stephen, knowing now that he would die upon the White Road, knew also that he would not die alone. There would be others with him, how many he did not know, but this Brother would be one of them. A solemn joy sprang up in his heart as he saw how

deep and strong and splendid is the love of spirits, as the truth dawned for him that there is companionship in the presence of God. He never spoke to the novice of the matter, words were too heavy and thick for such a thing of fire, yet he was conscious of the bond which held them together, conscious of it as a reality of the same order as the White Road and the calling of the sea. And he thought of the novice not as a young man in a black gown, but as a spirit who was at his side as they trod together through fire, trampling it under foot triumphantly, bursting swelling seas of fire, white fire that clomb and leaped about them, yet could not stay their progress. The Master of Novices, to whom he revealed everything, would only tell him to pray always and to be very humble.

And indeed he found it easy to be humble in the days that followed. He moved among his brethren gently and with gladness, doubt and weariness no longer vexing

him. At the thought of what was to come his soul was quieted and grew still, as a man who had come suddenly to the edge of an unfathomable precipice, and gazed with awe into the depths at his feet. In a thousand ways he found in the things around him foreshadowings; the dull glow of the fire reflected in the bricks of the kitchen floor, the flicker of flames upon the beams and metal work, the play of sunbeams on the white walls outside, had all a meaning which was sometimes awful and sometimes sheer love. Yet his work as cook was as well done as it had ever been; he was too good a Jesuit to regard illumination as an efficient substitute for cleaning vegetables.

Nevertheless, as in the Eastern story of the man whose angelic visitors became known by the light from them streaming through the curtains of his tent, so Stephen, in spite of his efforts to avoid singularity, was unable to do so altogether. For besides the new symbolism he found in out-

side things, his outlook upon life became changed in other ways, so that matters which before had seemed trivial now had for him a great and tragic meaning. For example, that bitterness and hatred should exist between man and man seemed to him now beyond all things dreadful, and—a thing that in the beginning troubled him not a little—his eyes would fill with tears and his breast heave at the sight of anger and uncharity. But after a while he ceased to be ashamed of these tears, feeling that they did no dishonour to his manhood, learning that there are tears of strength as well as of weakness, that only a strong heart can break. And once, seeing in the street two men quarrelling, he thrust between them and pushed them apart, saying nothing, only looking at them through his tears. And they slunk away abashed, their anger quenched and gone before those tears. One who was with Stephen and loved him, remembered that scene to his dying day.

His brethren in the house began to look upon him with no little veneration, and to speak of him among themselves as a saint. But he himself found in these matters only a reason for supposing that his hour was near, that at any moment the messenger might arrive who should summon him to start on his journey. And now that he had ceased to be impatient, the messenger was not slow in coming.

It was announced one day that they would soon have as visitor at Lisbon a priest whom all desired to see, a man whose fame for sanctity had spread far and wide through Portugal, Father Ignatius of the noble house of Azevedo, once Rector of the College of Lisbon, now head of all the Missions of the Company in Brazil. Rumour said that he had come from the New World to seek helpers in Europe, that he had a commission from the Pope and from the Father General to ask for volunteers from all the Provinces of the Order. In the

kitchen they told stories of his miracles, of his charity and penance, of his great love of the Blessed Mother of God. He had been in the house a whole day before Stephen saw him.

In the evening he spoke to the whole community, who were gathered in the garden to meet him. Stephen, tall and grave, stood waiting in his place among the lay-brothers; the Fathers formed the centre group, the novices were on the other side. In the strong light of the evening their faces glared white above their black gowns. It was not a gentle evening, for the day had been thunderous, and in the west the low black clouds seemed pressing out great spouts of light upon the darkening world. And this wild light caught the faces of the community as they stood there patiently waiting, and caught the face of the Saint as, presently, with the Rector he came out from the house. In a moment Stephen was back again by the crucifix in

the gorge, and learning for the first time the meaning of the road. For the face he saw now was the same that had looked so strangely on him there. The strange priest was Father Azevedo, and he knew that his hour had come.

Quietly and deliberately the missionary began to tell them the object of his visit. He spoke of the people sitting in darkness as one who had dwelt among them; he told of the horrors committed under the solemn domes of the great primeval forest, where cannibals dishonoured humanity in the cruel flickering firelight. And while his hearers shuddered at his words he turned almost fiercely to defend these savages, calling them our brothers who feel like us the thirst for God, but have not like us the water of truth wherewith to quench it.

"And they have drunk of the bitter waters," he cried, "the waters of paganism that drive men mad." And he pleaded for

help to deliver them, pleaded long and passionately, as a man whose heart was wounded. Then, while that company of grave men lit up with answering enthusiasm, so that they instinctively moved a little way towards him, he turned and forbade them, seeming to trample brutally upon their zeal. "For the chalice is exceeding bitter," he cried, "the chalice is exceeding bitter; let no one think of himself to say *possumus*—'we can.'" He would not hear of any one offering himself then and there for the work. Only on the morrow, and after earnest prayer, let those who felt called to it come forward.

That night was a landmark in the life of Stephen Zuraire. For as on the evening in the gorge the words of Father Azevedo had seemed to come in a manner out of the sky as a part of the luminous evening, so also on this occasion. For the troubled thunder-clouds and the fierce darting lights seemed to echo his cry of the bitter chalice,

and the west had lost its white rippling serenity and become all fire and gloom. As night fell, huge thunder-clouds came rolling in from the sea, and presently a great storm broke over Lisbon. In the shuddering pause between the clamour of each peal he heard again and again the cry that the chalice is exceeding bitter, heard it so clearly and distinctly that the sky seemed to become human, and he realized with awe that there may be agonies and strivings in the soul as tremendous as the striving of the elements. It seemed that for the first time he was learning to think nobly of humanity, to understand for what manner of being it was that Christ died, and was ashamed that in spite of faith and illumination his picture of man had been drawn with lines so faint and mean; so much of the pigmy, so little of the God. That warring midnight sky transfigured humanity for him, and he understood how it might be that God should delight to

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dwell with the children of men. He rejoiced to think of the kingly lot that awaited him, thrilled with joy to think that he might die to do some service for this splendid, pitiful friend of God. This joy grew triumphant as the storm sank, and the sky opened deep and holy with stars. And, as often happens in moments of great exultation, a verse from the Psalmist, that great singer by the sea of God, came and unloosened his tongue, and flooded his soul with its music.

"He raiseth up the poor man from the earth. He lifteth the poor man from the dunghill.

"He maketh him to sit at meat with Princes. Even with the Princes of His People."

Beyond the White Road, beyond the portals of fire to which it led, stood for him now until the end the waiting Princes, beings of untold love and untold glory, the Princes of His People.

In the morning Stephen, with a group of others who wished to volunteer, assembled before Father Azevedo, and went forward one by one to offer themselves. The lay-brothers came last, and Stephen saw the novice placed among those to whom a provisional acceptance had been accorded. When his own turn came the face of the priest lighted up with a smile of recognition.

"You must in any case let me have this Brother, Father Rector," he said. "I know him of old for a good missionary." Stephen was surprised to find himself smiling back as into the eyes of an old friend.

CHAPTER III

"Ripe men of martyrdom, that could reach down
With strong arms, their triumphal crown.
Such as could with lusty breath
Speak loud into the face of death
Their great Lord's glorious name."

Crashaw.

THERE lies not far from Lisbon a solitary place called in the language of the country El Val da Rosal, a place closed in with hills, looking towards the valley of the Tagus. To this place Ignatius Azevedo led his companions when he had completed his tour, and there for seven months they remained in retirement, waiting until the time arrived for them to sail. Memories of that seven months' sojourn lingered for years in the minds of the country people, and the cross on the top of one of the

hills, to which they went for prayer every evening at sunset, is to this day known as the martyrs' cross. By the simple peasants the men in dark gowns whom they saw moving about the low white house in the valley, chopping wood, drawing water, working at manual crafts, were venerated as saints when the object of their mission became known. And of all memories treasured and recalled when they had gone, that of the sight of them at nightfall winding up the hill to their cross, and of their forms breaking the great sky-line against the crimson west, remained the most vivid. Down in the valley the voices of the martyrs as they sang on the hill could be heard quite distinctly through the still evening, and when all had come to pass the symbolism, half-guessed at at the time, stood clearly revealed, and the place became sacred for evermore.

To Stephen Zuraire the time was one radiant with happiness of a new and

solemn sort, a happiness of which he had already had a glimpse, born of fellowship in a great matter. For though differing greatly in character and in nationality, the members of the band were one in a manner not easily realized, and this unity of purpose grew in meaning and in intensity as the days passed by. It changed from a desire to bring aid to those in need, into a vast and terrible longing to die for men. And with the longing came the assurance that it should be so. Not to Stephen only had the fate in store for them been clearly shown; we know, from the chance utterances of many of his companions, that their vision in that matter was quite as clear as his. In the Val da Rosal they dwelt together, separated from mankind, but in the world of souls a vaster barrier divided them from their kind, they stood apart as a band devoted to sacrifice, each learning to read upon the brow of his fellow the mark of doom. Little by little it

came to all of them—to some earlier, to others not until the very end—this consciousness that they must die. Thus they became a company bound together by no common bond, a company set apart for death, sitting, as it were, in the evening in a quiet room, waiting for the sound of the footfall in the passage, waiting for death with linked hands, whose clasp was a more sacred bond of brotherhood than we can understand.

This sense of separation, this assurance of a peculiar destiny, was in no way disturbed when the time for embarkation at length arrived. They were to sail under the protection of the new Governor of Brazil, Don Louis da Vasconcellos, and the scene of departure in the glorious river of Lisbon was a very brilliant one. The great galleons with their gilded pillars and carved majestical prows swung slowly down the river to the chiding of silver trumpets, while from the city behind them

a thousand steeples crashed an imperial farewell. Yet amid all the splendour the martyrs remained a group apart, for this pageant of sound and colour was not regal enough to match the glory of the thoughts that God had given them, and in their hearts there sounded a carillon which put the tumult of the bells to shame. For whoso has gazed upon the pageants of the cross can never again deem gold and scarlet fitting vesture for the dignity of man.

The larger number of the missionaries sailed in a merchant vessel called the *St. James*, a portion of which had been chartered for their use. A few, however, for whom there was no room, sailed in the flagship, being specially invited by Don Louis, a nobleman of great virtue and piety. But alike in the *St. James*, where their cabins under the prow were boarded off, and in the flagship, where they formed part of a brilliant crowd of officers and

gentlemen, they led their life apart as completely as though they were still in the house in the valley by the Tagus.

Stephen Zuraire sailed with Father Ignatius in the *St. James*, and had a tiny cabin with a window peeping out from under one of the great, gilded arms of the figure-head of the Saint, and looked out from it upon the White Road as one who was at last a wayfarer upon it. This window was so small that for the most part all he could see from it was a tiny patch of heaving water across which now and then a gull would skim, or the prow of one of the ships come see-sawing up and down. But when the weather was rougher, and the *St. James* swung to the great Atlantic rollers, the tiny outlook produced a very curious effect, and one that pleased him so much that he would sometimes remain there watching when he might have been up on deck. For as the bow of the vessel rose to meet the waves, the line of

sight flew upwards, tracing a path across the waters, and on reaching the horizon passed from sea to sky. The effect of this was particularly striking in the evening, when, since the fleet was headed almost due west, the path traced was that of the dying sun upon the waters, and the watcher found himself for a moment plunged full into the glare of its burning heart. This rapid flight upward into space and light brought back to Stephen with strange vividness all those thoughts of the White Road to God which he had once considered so fanciful, yet which had so strangely controlled and influenced his life. He remembered as he lay there watching how he had once thought of his mother as passing in this way down the Road, and this wild antic of the sea brought her back to him in thought almost perpetually. He pleased himself with the fancy of a haven to which he would presently come, a haven far beyond the roaring storms of death, where

she would be waiting for him radiant and at peace upon the shore, and would tell him, perhaps, that those strange callings had been part of her love reaching out and touching him from beyond the grave.

The influence of the missionaries soon became visible in the changed behaviour of the crew and passengers. A spirit of unwonted sobriety and even of devotion began to manifest itself. More than once Father Azevedo received applications from young men among the passengers to be admitted as members of his band, men on whom it had dawned that to be ordered about and to obey submissively might be the finest thing in life. One practice of his devising was especially popular, and the fame of it spread to the other ships of the fleet. Many of the missionaries were skilled musicians—they used this art greatly in dealing with the savages—and at night they would gather on the high poop with their instruments of music and

there sing together hymns of our Lady and litanies of their own composing, sometimes old songs of Portugal and Spain. Through the darkness the other ships of the fleet would be seen drawing in nearer to the *St. James*, their people all on deck and eager to hear; great wallowing monsters of the deep they seemed, as the phosphorescent water splashed heavily back from their bulging sides, great monsters of the deep, drawn from their lairs by music. To many it seemed that the voices were more than earthly as they came borne across in the darkness; for no singer can make such sweet music as he whose heart is full of gladness, whose proper language it is. And the hearts of the missionaries at this time were flooded with joy as the sky with light.

The first stage of the voyage ended at Madeira, and thus far favouring winds and a gentle sea had made it unusually prosperous. For Stephen and his brethren it had

been a time of great peace and consolation, a time when the darkness to come seemed yet a long way off. Yet the darkness surely awaited them, the sun that warmed them shone from beyond the darkness, they must pass through darkness into light. And no sooner had they reached the beautiful island than doubts and perplexities at once began to arise. For it was announced that Don Louis had determined to winter with his fleet at Madeira and to proceed the next season to Brazil, and the captain of the merchant ship *St. James*, who had a cargo for the neighbouring island of Las Palmas, declared his intention of proceeding upon his voyage alone. Father Azevedo had to decide whether he would remain in safety with the fleet or face the perils of an unprotected voyage in the *St. James*. The fleet was very crowded, there was no certainty of his finding room for all his men when it sailed the following spring, and in any case it would be impossible to keep his

men together any longer, a thing very important when so many of them were very young. And yet the danger of proceeding unprotected was very great and terrible. For apart from the dangers of the sea there was always the danger from pirates to be reckoned with, and to the Portuguese of that age a pirate was a fiend rather than a man, a fiend of the sea, whose cruelty often arose from the fact that he was a rebel against the old religion. And at this time the fierce Huguenot, Jacques Souris, was known to be cruising in those waters, Souris who made it his boast that he had never yet spared monk or priest who fell into his hands.

He had certainly knowledge of the presence of the missionaries in Don Louis' fleet, and though with his few ships he dared not attack the great Portuguese squadron, he would turn aside to attack them should they venture to continue their voyage unprotected. Prudence seemed

"They would gather with their instruments of music." [p. 109

imperatively to forbid the venture, and the voice of prudence, to one who has to answer for the lives of others, must in general be decisive.

But Father Azevedo was one who walked with God and learnt secret things. Patiently his followers watched him as he poured out his soul in prayer for light, calmly and patiently, for they knew that he was above them on a watch-tower of the spirit, and that presently his voice would come pealing down to them who waited, giving them full assurance of the course they were to follow.

It was on a Sunday morning; they had all heard Mass and received Communion from him in a church on the island, and he spoke to them. "Let us go hence," he said quite simply, "for God wills it so. But it may well be that we must die in going, and let each one think well if he be ready to die." There is this magic property in words—that they may become of

a sudden and without apparent reason transfigured and divine. In those words, "It may be we must die," the doors were flung open for those who had for so long waited. Across the sun-lit church glowing in ruby and gold, between them and their Father the gaunt spectre passed; they felt the cold and the shrinking and the horror near at hand. And a tragical thing; some of them were afraid and showed their fear in their faces. The Saint, to save them, made a reason for excepting them, and ordered that they should remain on the island.

So on a great morning, when the quays were thronged with people who waved their hats and shouted, the *St. James* put out to sea, and with her sailed forty of the missionaries, and among them Stephen Zuraire. Out to the high sea they sailed, the sea that lay before them all peace and restfulness, a great couch spread by God on whose blue mantle all the world might

lie in peace and be rocked into slumber. Yet for him and for his fellows a couch within whose folds of silk a serpent lay concealed, of which the very beauty and softness made the thing more dreadful. Every day they must watch for the snake's head to come gliding towards them from among the folds, knowing that when it came they must bear to be devoured.

They had almost reached Las Palmas, the port to which they were bound; already its roofs and steeples could be seen, and the masts of the shipping that lay in its harbour, when the wind of a sudden changed and they were swept back along the coast. Here they landed and were for proceeding to the capital by land, a distance of some eight miles or so. And at Las Palmas the captain was determined now to wait until the next year and to proceed to Brazil under the protection of the fleet. For the missionaries at least the danger now seemed past.

They had landed and were already started on the journey, when the voice of their leader called them to return. For again he had seen the hand that beckoned, and heard the voice that called them back to the sea. And they smiled at one another gravely, as men who understand but cannot explain, who know that there is a wisdom which seems folly to the world. And without a word they went on board again.

So they started on their eight miles' voyage who had passed so many hundred. And before it was accomplished the serpent they looked for came up from the sea and seized them. Five specks appeared on the horizon, before they could make the port, five dots that grew into ships, five prows before which the water curled back in a steady stream, and then the thunder of guns and the sickening quiver of the stricken ship. Stephen and his brethren knelt below in the cabin, being ordered to

do so by their Father, who alone among them was a priest and remained on deck.

And that cabin was for them their Place of the Agony. For when at last the doors were torn open and the victors dragged them up on to the deck, the bitterness of death was passed. Huddled together in the gloom they waited, while close above them overhead there sounded a terrible noise like the shuffling feet of dancers, and down one window of the cabin crept a red trickle very slowly, pausing and darting forward like a living thing. There they knelt and obeyed and suffered their agony, alone in the gloom amid the tumult of the battle, striving while the sweat poured off their brows, to stifle the longing for light and the sky. And one, a novice, spoke a word that comforted them all greatly, for he said that perhaps God would bring about as a fruit of their death salvation of their murderers, and that in Heaven they would all be glad together. Stephen

thought of the gold for which he had been so long a patient seeker, and that now by a little endurance he might surely win some store.

So there was triumph in his eyes, and in the eyes of all of them, when at last they were dragged upon deck, and the thought of the fierce pain of wounds was a joy. And there one by one they were hewn down and cast into the sea. When the sun set that night they lay upon the White Road, dead, little black specks upon the trail of glory, washed to and fro by the waves, seeming men who had walked too eagerly towards the flaming ramparts of the world, and been stricken down in their presumption.

But far away in Spain there was one who numbered a kinsman among the band, and she in the spirit looked forth that night over the White Road, and saw a great company clad in brightness rising from the waves with a thunder of jubilation. In the

vision of St. Teresa of Jesus, "for angelical height of speculation more than a woman," in the word of our Lord the Pope, who has numbered them among the blessed, we find confirmation of our faith that they reached and overpassed the flaming ramparts, and are seated with the Princes of God in the Glory of God.

. . . . . .

Thus have we imagined the story of the Blessed Stephen Zuraire, venturing, it may be with presumption, into a holy place. Yet their human story is the only way by which to travel to the blessed in Heaven, and when history fails we cannot think that we offend if, like children, we make believe. And there is a reason why this story of these martyrs should be told in English, for men in this island have judged them and their race very harshly, throwing stones freely whose own house was somewhat brittle. Yet in the self-sacrifice of the Latin missionaries we find alone the

light which saves the story of the entrance of Europe upon her inheritance in the West from being altogether sordid. The pirate-patriots who fill so large a space in the annals of our own land, religious though they often were, are but sorry candles to place beside these suns. The day may come when in England we shall feel shame to remember that the brothers of such men were traitors by our statute law and died in torture upon Tyburn Tree.

THE KING'S VISIT

THE KING'S VISIT

CHAPTER I

OF THE SIN OF BROTHER ROGER

"THE soul of a good monk should be like his cloister," once said the holy Abbot Baldwin of St. Edmundsbury; "for as the great sun shineth in the midst thereof, giving light to the brethren in their labours, so in the good monk's soul the light of God's grace shineth, giving worth and seemliness to all he doeth." The simile was much admired alike for its truth and piety; perhaps a little the more fervently admired in that it emanated from the Lord Abbot. It was at once given a Latin rendering and

inscribed in the monastic chronicle under the heading of *aurea dicta*. The poet of the house turned it into a very neat acrostic, in which the initial letter of each line, read downwards, formed the Abbot's name. The Magister Scholæ gave it as a writing-lesson to his scholars so frequently, that many of them in the end came to be somewhat wearied of this characteristic of the good man's soul.

Among those of a later generation who with pain had committed the Abbot's aphorism to writing many hundred times, was a certain Roger of the Schola Puerorum, a child of the abbey, one whom his pious parents had devoted to the service of God from his earliest years. The Master of Schools, a monk of great method, had the practice of classing all his scholars under one of the four temperaments of Galen the Physician, as choleric that is to say, or sanguine, phlegmatic or melancholic. Some of them in this respect gave

him great trouble, presenting strange combinations of all four with but little that was definite. But with Roger he had no difficulty; at the very first glance at his small, serious face and dark eyes he went into the melancholic group. "God hath given thee much black bile, child Roger," the master would often say, and though he was severe with Roger, he gave him none the less great trusts and charges, being somewhat of a melancholic turn himself.

Now Roger's lot was cast in the days when King Henry VI., of pious memory, ruled the realm of England, and of all the years in that troubled reign even an unlettered person would have known to expect something especial from the year 1433, having so many threes and as good as a five in it. On an autumn evening of this year Roger was polishing in the cloister and *he* certainly was in a very restless and uneasy frame of mind. No one was there but himself, but instead of getting on with

his work, he kept leaving it to look up anxiously at the whirling sky. It was a gusty afternoon, and now and then the wind would carry in a leaf or two right over the roof of the cloister, as though to seek there shelter from the stormy world outside.

"He that hateth his broder is a morderer," he said suddenly to himself or to the sky. The great grey arches went sweeping away all round him, and he seemed a very small black dot in the midst of them.

He returned with a sigh to his occupation of rubbing the desks. But his eyes were continually wandering off in the direction of the great aumbry of books that stood in a recess by itself. At last he went to it and rubbed its door over with minute care, and then stood and looked at it. "'Twere a thing right jeopardous and fearful," he said to himself, and opened the door a little way.

He had scarcely done so when a noise at the further end of the cloister made him start and prick up his ears like an attentive terrier. It was unmistakably the sound of a voice in the distance, an unheard of and very interesting irregularity at that hour of the day. Brother Roger tucked his hands, polishing rag and all, under his gown, and strained every faculty to listen.

The big door at the end opened with a great clanging of locks, that echoed right away down the cloister, and a noisy grating that seemed like pain in that quiet place. "Beware how ye go, good fellows, have a great care of my lord's gear," said the voice in anxious undertones, while its owner appeared walking backwards like a chamberlain. "'Twere a very great disworship to my Lord Abbot, 'twere a great and importable loss, should ye do it hurt. I had liever ye were dead, good fellows, I had liever ye were dead."

Brother Roger recognized now the voice and the lengthy figure of Master John the Precentor. And this to some extent explained the mystery, for Master John Lydgate could do things not expedient for ordinary men. Still, to talk in the cloister at such an hour and to bring strange men into it was a straining of privilege even for Master John.

And the persons to whom his exhortation was addressed were two common working-men of the town, and they bore on their backs the object of his solicitude in the shape of a huge roll of scarlet cloth. They were bending almost double under their burden, breathing heavily and slouching in their walk, scuffling up the hay of the floor with their feet. Master John carefully directed their course, keeping one hand always on the bale. He had on large horn spectacles and was anxiously peering through them on either side, as though the passage were very strait and difficult,

whereas it was wide enough for a dozen to walk abreast.

It was not long before Master John caught sight of Roger. "Child," he said at once, "hasten to open the door. Oh! child, make speed, 'tis a service ye may do for the King our sovereign lord." Naturally he hurried at once to obey, and when he had placed the door wide open, stood leaning against it, keeping his eyes fixed on the scarlet bale. It fascinated him with its magnificence.

But scarlet is the colour of sin, and its influence upon this small son of St. Benedict was scarcely a good one. No sooner had the door closed behind Master John, and his voice died away in the distance, than he went to the aumbry of books again and resolutely opened the door.

"Tarrying draweth peril," he said to himself. "That would prove a great unstableness in me if I was conquered." And he drew one of the books from the cup-

board and carried it across to where the desks were.

He placed it on one of them that was not his own, and with a pen made a great black smear right across its page. Then, as a refinement of wickedness, he placed some of the dirty hay from the floor in between the leaves, as though the owner of the desk, a person altogether lost to decency, had used such stuff as a marker. He gazed reflectively at his handiwork. "A rewly change," he said, "a rewly rewly change."

He turned away feeling very wicked, and as he did so, a little bird, that must have been perched somewhere near, fluttered off and disappeared in the great square of light above. A dreadful superstitious thought came to Brother Roger. "It's seen you," said the thought, "it's gone to tell God." He shook his head, but it made him feel very uncomfortable.

He looked again at the book, and the

black smear seemed to stand out like a wound. He returned to the desk and looked more closely at the vile disfigurement. And something he saw there made him wheel round quickly with a face ashy pale, as though an enemy stood behind him. "*Retro, Sathanas,*" he said, quite loud; "this is thy mischief, God knoweth," and he made the sign of the Cross several times in quick succession.

Now this was what had frightened him so much. On the book, which was one of the manuscript grammars each boy in the school had to make for himself, the pious author had written, *Ego sum bonus puer quem Deus amat*, and the defacing smudge had gone right through the *Deus*.

But if the devil thought he was going to get the better of Brother Roger in that way, he was quite mistaken. It is true he looked round nervously, half in fear for a patter of hoofs and sniffing for possible sulphur, but he had no thought of moving

the book. Still it was not altogether pleasant to think the Enemy was so near and had so keen an eye.

And though no ghostly terror lurked to disturb his soul in the long grey vista of arches, a merely earthly object met his view which banished for the time all less substantial fears. Through the open bays at the other side of the square he caught sight of the figure of a monk slowly making his way along, with downcast eyes and hands clasped together in a truly edifying manner. Yet to Brother Roger, as he watched him appear and disappear at regular intervals behind the pillars, the Enemy himself at that moment would have been almost as welcome and far more manageable. There was always the holy water stoup for him, but this monk was no other than the Master of Schools.

On he came, slowly making the round of the cloister, and always with the same modest demeanour and at the same reverent

pace. Brother Roger, stricken for a moment with panic, seized the book and was for pushing it back, smudge and all, into the chest. But he paused, partly because the master had wonderful powers of vision for all his downcast eyes, and partly because, being a person of resolute character, he did not love to go back upon his steps. He left the book where it was, and marched off to a distant desk.

So when eventually the master rounded the last corner and at last raised his eyes from the ground, he remarked two exceptional objects, to wit, an open book where no book should have been, and in the far distance Brother Roger, with his back turned, rubbing a desk with exemplary vigour.

The master coughed significantly, a call would have made too much noise. He coughed again, and Brother Roger, fearing the possible effects of further deafness upon the great man's temper, rose and

came to him with an uncomfortable cold feeling in his stomach.

The master pointed with a terrible gesture at the offending volume. "*Cujus est liber?*" he asked severely.

Now Brother Roger's powers of conversing in the Latin tongue were not at that date of a remarkably high order, and they more often proved a cause of weeping than of joy to their possessor. Still he felt he could manage this much, and replied with grammatical accuracy and a decent show of reluctance: "*Est liber Fratris Stephani, magister mi.*"

It may have been that this unwonted fluency surprised the master, or perhaps he did not wish to talk unnecessarily in the cloister. He asked no more questions, at any rate, and with a descriptive gesture, to indicate that his informant might return to his work, he turned and departed.

Brother Roger resumed his polishing operations, and continued them exactly so

long as the master remained in view. Then, placing the oily rag on the top of the desk, to suggest that he had only gone away for a minute or two, he returned to the armatory.

The recess in which the armatory stood was a deep one, and a little wider than the great chest, so that on either side remained a narrow passage. Through this passage a very slender person could just manage to squeeze, and so arrive at the important discovery that behind was a cavity at least a foot or two deep.

The great advantage of the place was that you could hear from it everything that went on in the cloister. It was of this Brother Roger was thinking now; there were likely to be interesting events there soon. By peeping cautiously round the corner you could see any one who passed, but not much else, the field of view was so narrow.

He had not been safely established there

many minutes before he saw the venerable figure of the master sail majestically by, with Brother Stephen following, like a small boat towed behind. Brother Roger's expectant ear was placed in the very best situation for hearing, but if there were any conversation going on it must have been conducted entirely by signs, for there was a long pause and not a word came.

Then at last the silence was broken, and that by the voice of the master, earnestly raised in prayer. "*Sancte Petre*," he was saying with great unction and much drawing-out of vowels, "*ora pro nobis*," and immediately followed a resounding *thwack*.

Brother Roger, in the place of concealment, ground his teeth with vexation. "The Apostles allonely!" he gasped, under his breath; "ah! I care not a mum of his mouth for the Twelve Apostles."

The seeming profanity of this remark requires explanation. It arose from the overgreat care the master had to train his

pupils to habits of piety. To the attainment of this laudable end he had devised many ingenious expedients, and among others, that of reciting some devout exercise while administering the numerous castigations regarded by the age as an indispensable adjunct to the pursuit of learning. He had a carefully graduated scale. In more prolonged operations he would recite the entire Litany of the Saints, omitting always the invocation of the Blessed Virgin, "for she hath no part in punishment, child," he would say. Sometimes also, in sheer tenderness of heart, he would shorten matters by omitting the doctors or the martyrs. His minimum of brevity was the invocation of the Twelve Apostles, and condemnation to this penalty was therefore regarded as a comparatively trivial affair.

So Brother Roger's heart burned within him with vexation as he heard the master, with grave deliberation and due pause,

reciting the familiar list, *Sancte Bar-tho-lo-mæ-e, ora pro nobis; Sancte Mat-thæ-e,* and so to St. Mathias and the end. He heard the well-worn *disciplina* restored to its resting-place, and having allowed a judicious interval to elapse that the master might get well away, he sidled out from the place of shelter and re-appeared in the cloister.

Brother Stephen was leaning against the chest and trying to comfort his shoulders. "Verily Judas sleepeth not," he said indignantly, when he saw Brother Roger.

Now Brother Roger was so angry that his only thought in answering was what would annoy Brother Stephen most. So he modestly cast down his eyes and replied, in Latin, as the Rule prescribed:

"*Est tempus silentii, frater*—'Tis silence-time, my Brother."

And then his outraged feelings got the better of him, and sticking his tongue derisively in his cheek, he made a grimace at

Brother Stephen, and returned to the polishing.

Now we shall better understand the wrath and exceeding bitterness of Brother Roger, when we have seen how momentous was the enterprise in which he had been engaged and had most lamentably failed.

CHAPTER II

OF THE GREAT PLAN OF MASTER JOHN

ON the utas-day of All Hallows, in the year of grace fourteen hundred and thirty-three, the King's herald came to Bury, which was a very great mark of honour for the town. Now to walk a well-shod horse through the cobble-stone streets of Bury made a loudish clopety-clop, and to trot him raised a clatter that disturbed quite half of the town. But the herald, when he came, pricked through magnificently at a hand gallop, despite the narrowness and the open stalls, striking sparks with a resounding ring of iron hoofs and flinty cobbles. He rode a great white horse, gay with trappings, and he himself, a big man, was in bright scarlet, with the

King's arms on his breast in a golden device. And as he rode he looked up at the gables of the houses, leaning back with stiff, proud legs; and with one hand holding aloft a parchment scroll to the narrow streak of sky between the houses, he shouted in a lusty voice: "God save King Harry, my masters! God save the King!" Though the street was lined thick with townsfolk almost in a moment, many only saw the back of him and the parchment scroll, he was gone so quickly. And he rode up to the great door of the monastery and gave a mighty pull to the jangling bell.

"'Tis a messenger from the King's Grace," said Alderman Thomas Chapman, for the assembled crowd's behoof, and Alison, the ale-wife, laughed impertinently. Every one was gazing down the street or else at Master William, the leather-dresser, clouting publicly the head of his apprentice for not removing the wares in time. By

a mischance the royal horse had landed his hoof just there in a puddle of mud and lavishly besprinkled some of the dresser's best hides.

"Let be, Master William," said the alderman, a kindly person; "mayhap the King's person self cometh to Bury ward." A shrewd guess, as it afterwards transpired.

Brother Nicholas, the Brother Cook's assistant of the monastery, had gone that morning to buy some eggs in the town for the comfort of those of the brethren who had lately been let blood.

From the shop-door he saw where the messenger had gone, and he saw the people standing in the street. Being a religious man of the house, the wise and seemly thing would have been to wait a while till the throng had somewhat lessened, or else to have returned by some less public way. But instead he marched straight down the middle with the eggs in a basket on his arm and eyes modestly cast on the ground,

as though he had remarked nothing unusual. He did not look for such a jostling and pushing as the people made all round him, plying him with questions with a sad want of reverence, and actually stopping his way. And when they found he had nothing to tell, they continued to jostle and push, so that by the time he had struggled to the end of the street he was hot and very red in the face from temper, while at least half his eggs were broken or cracked. A just retribution, as he afterwards repentantly admitted, for having sought the vain applause of men.

In the monastery itself the arrival of the herald naturally made a very great commotion. Abbot Curteys was away at the time, at his manor of Elmswell, but the Prior, in his place, received and read the message with all due circumstance. And before the herald had finished his second cup of wine in the guest-chamber, every monk in the house, except a few of the very old and

deaf, knew that the little King had declared his intention of spending his Christmas following with the monks of St. Edmundsbury.

Now there were people who said that when the news of the royal visit was brought to my Lord the Abbot, at Elmswell, his lordship was not the best pleased, having an eye, they said, to the costliness of the matter. But if this were indeed so, and not the mere imagining of busy prattlers, no one would have guessed as much from the course he took. For at once he caused the most lavish preparations to be set on foot, and he allowed Master John Lydgate a free hand in devising novelties for the King's entertainment. Of these the most striking (though there were many other very fine ones, but not so religious), was his plan for singing the Christmas hymn, the *Adeste Fideles*. The hymn, of course, does not come in the Divine Office for the Nativity nor in

The Lord Abbot himself came . . . and sat through nearly a whole practice.

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any of the Masses, and Master John conceived the bold and startling idea of singing it in the great church before the Midnight Mass, Christ's Mass by excellence. When the Christmas bells were at last silent, while the church was thronged with townsfolk, and the sacred ministers stood vested before the high altar, with the brethren hooded in the stalls; through the silence, from far above in the great tower, there should break the clear voices of the boys' choir singing the *Adeste*, and the first verse should be sung alone by the strongest and sweetest treble among them. Then the whole choir should take it up, and the brethren from below should roll and thunder it back till the whole church cried aloud in adoration. He would say all this to the sacristan, Brother Michael, with waving arms and eyes that sparkled even through the spectacles; he had been in the south, had Master John, and had not altogether the English way in his talking.

Brother Michael, on the other hand, who came from Yorkshire, would listen to this eloquence with one eye thoughtfully closed, as his manner was. "*Lente, lente, carissime,*" he would say, "*sunt difficultates, sunt obstacula.*" Indeed, in the beginning there was a rather strong opposition to the scheme from some of the brethren, as unrubrical and irregular generally; and more than one animated discussion on it took place in the calefactory. Master John Lydgate declared he had good reason for believing that something very similar had been done a few years back in the Cathedral Church of Arles, to which argument the Prior replied by the statement, which no one could call in question, that they were not at Arles, but at Bury in England. The Prior was throughout the most determined opponent of the scheme, but it was generally thought Master John had the better of the argument.

The news came first to the Schola

Puerorum in an indirect way. It happened, on the day the matter was finally settled, that the Prior at dinner upset a large bowl of broth. Now when the Prior, or any other great personage, did a thing of that sort, since it would scarcely have been seemly for him to kneel in the middle of the fratry and do penance like any ordinary monk, the Obedientary of the house decreed that the boy who was serving him should kneel in his place, "that no fault may seem to go unpunished," said the Obedientary. So on this occasion for the rest of dinner the Prior's unlucky server had to kneel out in front of the high table on the hard flag-stones. The Prior was a man of kindly disposition, and though the sight of the sufferer did not, from long practice, spoil his dinner, he would generally, at the end, bring down some dainty from the high table and bestow it upon the innocent victim of his carelessness. But on this occasion, though

the victim tried to attract his attention by pitifully sighing and making a noise with his foot, the Prior stalked out taking no notice whatever.

"Ye will have no gentle cheer of the Father Prior to-day, child," said the Coquinarius, who was gathering fragments, and when asked the reason would not answer, but sent the victim to the kitchen to get something to eat. In the kitchen, as luck would have it, the Prior's bad humour was precisely the subject of discussion, and the victim, modestly dining in a corner of the great vaulted place, heard for the first time of the glory in store for the Schola Puerorum. The news, when he presently announced it, was received with incredulity, then with boundless enthusiasm, and every outward demonstration of joy permitted by religious modesty.

For it was not only that the Schola would appear before the King and Court in a responsible and honourable position, while

the novices, who gave themselves such airs, would be quite out of sight and unnoticed; that triumph was almost lost sight of in the prospect of ascending the great tower. Most of them had looked up longingly for years to the giddy heights of its great, grey, rugged walls, and had thought enviously of what nests must be there as they watched the birds flying in and out. Some of a more fanciful turn of mind used to make up stories about it, and pretended they could see the angels moving to and fro between the battlements. And indeed, when the sunshine of early morning was on it, or the sky of evening glowed in saffron behind it in the west, strange and beautiful figures of light and shade seemed to play among its stately pinnacles.

And now they were really to ascend it, no longer in spirit only, but in actual fact, and that in the night-time, which would make the thing ten times more adventurous. No wonder the Schola found in the

prospect unlimited matter for speculation and comment, both in and out of the regulation hours for conversation.

And there was further to be taken into account the distinction conferred upon them in the matter of music. For the boys' choir had generally a very humble part in singing the Divine Office, and by more than one of the brethren was regarded rather as an unmitigated nuisance than as a valuable aid to harmony. And now to this despised section of the harmonious brotherhood, before the King's Majesty and all his Court, the honour of the house was to be entrusted, nay, even in some sense the honour of the great St. Edmund himself, since the father shares in the good name of his sons. They began at once to feel the benefit of the promotion in the increased respect with which their practices were regarded by the rest of the community. The practices of the boys' choir had always been a fruitful subject for

monastic wit, and at one time a scurrilous picture had gone the round of at least the junior portion of the house, representing on one side what was supposed to be the choir practising, and on the other side a squealing porker, while underneath was written, "*I had rather the pigge.*" This was in unkind allusion to the fact that other than sounds of joyful melody were sometimes heard while the practice was in progress, that terrible volume, the Obedientary, explicitly directing the Precentor to pull the hair or thump the heads of those who failed to sing in time and tune.

But now it became quite an ordinary thing for one or more of the elder brethren to be present at the practices as interested, if critical, auditors; the Novice-Master was there almost every day, and no doubt the novices would have liked to come, if they had been allowed; it was said that some of them had been caught listening outside. The day of greatest triumph, however, was

when the Lord Abbot himself came, with his chaplains in attendance, and sat through nearly a whole practice, watching with kind, fatherly eyes the rows of anxious little faces, and Master John Lydgate waving time copiously in front. The Abbot was so pleased with the performance that he ordered a special dole of apples to be distributed among the choir.

As the great day drew nearer the burning question became who would be chosen to sing the first verse alone. Master Lydgate had chosen out six of the best voices to practise it, but resolutely refused to say who had the preference. It was, however, pretty generally agreed in the Schola that the choice lay between two only, the other four having, in various ways, clearly proved themselves incapable. The favourite undoubtedly was Brother Stephen, who was more commonly known as "Gloria Patri," from the frequency with which his high treble figured in a favourite setting

of the doxology. Gloria was very popular in the house, even Brother Paulinus would sometimes smile grimly at him, and jocosely (when the Rule permitted speaking) ask him the Latin for "goose," or some pleasant thing of that sort. The master had him classed as one of sanguine temperament; a sort, he held, that needed much checking; and indeed Gloria had something of the character of a reprobate, and was very frequently in the wars. If only for this reason, most people would have been glad to see him elected, but though his voice was good he had unfortunately a defective ear, and had lost quite a quantity of his yellow hair at choir practice in consequence.

And then he had a very formidable rival in Roger. Roger was not popular in the school, his conscientious discharge of his high office prevented that, but he was not a little feared, and when he asked for a thing generally got it. His ear, too, was

remarkably good; *he* never sang flat or out of tune like other boys, and his voice, though not quite so sweet as Gloria's, was not at all bad and much more powerful.

Personally, Brother Roger felt he was bound to get it. He was the elder, for one thing, and age ought to count for something, surely. Besides, no one doubted that his voice was stronger, and this was a case for strength if ever there was one. And he wanted to get it, oh my goodness! as much as any one ever wanted anything. Ambition was bred in the very marrow of Roger's bone, and here was what would set him on a pinnacle of fame where none could touch him. He left no stone unturned to secure the prize. He practised most sedulously even in private, and prayed with immense fervour to our Lady and St. Edmund to get it for him. When the Abbot's benefaction of apples was distributed, while the others consumed theirs straightway on the spot, he, in defiance of

all rules, slipped out unperceived and gave his to a beggar sitting at the gate, and watched with an indescribable pang the fragrant red fruit disappear into the beggar's dirty bag. But he reflected, with something of a feeling of triumph, that such an act of sacrifice would not go unnoticed and unrewarded.

So the shock was all the ruder when one afternoon, as he was industriously cleaning an altar candlestick in one corner of the big sacristy, Master Lydgate and the Prior entered discussing in undertones, yet with some animation, of all things this very burning question. The Prior, as usual, was raising difficulties, and Master John was answering them, and, oh, the misery of it! was praising the voice of Brother Stephen as the candidate selected.

So he was not to get it after all? Roger had to gulp hard to keep down the sobs, and a dreadful ache of jealousy began at once in his chest or thereabouts. A big,

hot drop fell splash on to the candlestick, and he mopped his eyes sorrowfully with the polishing rag to check the flow of the rest. And the candlestick had practically to be done all over again, and even then the sacristan was not satisfied, and pulled Roger's ear for slovenly work.

Roger did not impart his information to the Schola: that would have been too bitter a pill. Instead, he sulked, and let the angry, gnawing thing inside get bigger. And that evening, just as they were taking their places in the church, came the thought, "If Gloria got into a great disgrace, may be they would not suffer him to sing."

"'Tis the devil for certain," said Roger sternly to himself. "*Retro, Sathanas;* 'tis the devil, for it came to me in church." But all the same he listened to the thought, though occasionally uttering ejaculations to signify his disapproval of it all.

Little by little the idea grew more defi-

nite, until it assumed the form of a deliberate plan to ink one of Gloria Patri's books, and leave it where the master should see it. The heinousness of the offence was sufficiently grave, and if it came to a question of whose story was to be believed, he had no doubt that his superior reputation for probity would win the day with the master. He knew it was all very wicked, and suffered fearfully from his evil conscience, being sometimes afraid to look at the altar in church for fear an angry face should peer out at him.

And then, after all the danger and the sacrifice of virtue, the scheme had hopelessly failed. The master had been satisfied with "the Twelve Apostles," and said no more about the matter. Small wonder the world seemed a very bitter place to this small sinner, four odd centuries ago.

CHAPTER III

OF THE TRIUMPH OF GLORIA PATRI

A WONDER through all the east land was the abbey tower of St. Edmundsbury. Strong and tall it raised its head far over the wet green plains; so tall that there were times when it seemed to join earth and heaven, for the damp mist of the plain would hide its base, while round its head the low clouds wreathed and whirled. And very faithful was the great tower to the truth for which it stood. Every Sunday and every greater feast-day through the year, swelling and dying with the wind there came to the utmost reaches of the plain the cry of the bells for God. In the belfry the ringers tugged silently at the ropes, and

the bells, like living things, tore madly up and down with great cries, as though they would break through the limits of the gamut into unknown worlds of sound and music. Yet never had they quite such power and magic as when they pealed for the Midnight Mass through the dark of Christmas night.

Suddenly from high above in the blackness came the cold, sharp note of the tenor bell. The "Haut et Cler" they called that bell, and high and clear was its music. Far away among the sedges of the river the fisher in his wattle hut could hear that bell, and the poor rogues in the prison could hear it, and turned to feel the clanking chain and the iron, ice-cold, on the wrist. And in the little town the burgher in his warm bed heard it; and it came to mothers watching anxious by their little ones, and to the leper sad and lonely in the lazar-house, and to the muffled watchman keeping guard beside the gate. And

each was glad in his way and made t holy sign in reverence, for that once aga the night of Christes Mass had come.

They kept good hours in the little to of Bury, and even on that famous Chri mas night when King Henry slept at t Abbey most of them were snug in bed a asleep well within an hour of curfew, wi their cloaks carefully brushed for the m row and hung behind the door. The go burghers were tired, we may well suppo with the day's ceremony of receiving t little King, and there is undoubtedly more valuable aid to devotion at the Mi night Mass than a few hours' honest slee

In the Abbey, usually so still and tra quil at this hour, there was no little noi and confusion. It was a bitter cold nigl with a fall of snow just beginning, whi made every one the more eager to get unc cover. The crowd of vagabonds and i persons who hung, in spite of the co round the great gate, were rewarded wh

now and then it swung open to receive some tardy guest, by seeing in the distance through the archway the great courtyard thronged with men and cattle, with torches flaring through the falling snow. These were grooms and foot-boys unlading with much shouting the pack-horses of the great lords lodging in the house.

Inside the monastery the stairs and passages were all brightly lighted with candles which cost, the Cancellarius declared, the rent of a manor to purvey. The parti-coloured liveries of the great lords' retainers and the royal scarlet of the King's servants formed a strange contrast to the grey walls and the black habits of the monks, who were hospitably doing their best to content every one. There was, none the less, a good deal of confusion; King Henry's followings from the very beginning were always badly ordered.

King Henry himself, of course, was in no wise to blame, at least on this occasion,

being too young to direct affairs in person. He was lodged as sumptuously as might be in the Abbot's palace, and with him Richard de Beauchamp, the Earl of Warwick, a grim, black man to whom his governance had been entrusted. It was said the little King did not love him overmuch, and with truth it would seem, for the Earl thought well not long after to send in a petition to the Council praying to be protected in the future against the possible grudging of the King.

The Schola Puerorum was almost unheeded in the general excitement of the evening; the master had been appointed to attend the Lord Bishop of Ely, a guest of the house, or things might have been very different. As it was they were nominally in the charge of Master John Lydgate, the Precentor, who was much too busy in the church to do more than tell them to have their hands and faces washed

and their hair cut, and to wait in the dormitory till midnight.

Some, more fortunate than the rest, were employed in domestic offices about the house, to help in the fratry, for example, or to cut up apples in the kitchen. These last reported fearful things of Coquinarius' temper when at last they managed to slip away. One in particular, who had charitably been engaged in conveying some fragments of the feast to the brethren in the dormitory, had had his ears so soundly boxed that he said the master was nothing to it. Others had still more exciting intelligence to impart, having been shown a sword by one of the men-at-arms that he swore had killed over a thousand Frenchmen, including several knights, and he let them hold it in their hands. There were all sorts of stories too about the sayings and doings of the great men in the house, and one boy had even seen the little King. It was earlier in the evening, and he saw

him leaning out from a window of the Abbot's palace, all in red, with his long hair falling round, and calling "Pretty, pretty, pretty," to the fluttering doves he was feeding with corn.

These tidings from without served to some extent to beguile the monotony of waiting, but they ceased after a while, and when the brethren had carefully cut each other's hair and washed their hands and faces with unusual vigour, there was really nothing else to do until it was suddenly discovered that the Precentor had left them his keys, and that there was nothing to prevent them anticipating matters a little and making some unofficial investigations in the tower. It was Roger who started the suggestion, and it fell upon ready ears, for it was already getting late and the long-anticipated ascent might easily degenerate into a mere prosaic procession under the Precentor's eye. Besides, every one was inclined to treat Roger tenderly that even-

ing, as one who had lost his chance of earning glory.

So they started in some trepidation, as was but natural, Roger leading the way. The house was quieter now, and there was no one to observe the line of white-faced little figures creeping noiselessly along the wall. They reached unobserved the small door studded with nails that led to the tower, and Roger, as leader, put in the big key and, tugging with both hands, managed to make it turn. The door grated open, showing inside the first turn of a narrow, winding stone staircase; a damp, musty smell came out from it, and a breath of cold air that made them shiver.

They stood huddled together at the door, peering into the gloom by the light of a candle taken from the nearest sconce, and every one thought immediately of all the uncanny stories that were told about the tower. Some people said it was haunted by a ghost that wandered about moaning

dreadfully, and always just one turn of the stairs above. In the flickering light of the candle the steps, mysteriously disappearing round the corner, looked just the sort of place for such grisly visitants. Excitement in the little group was rapidly giving way to an unpleasant cold fear.

Gloria Patri was by far the worst; his teeth were obviously chattering, and he made no attempt to disguise his dismay at the prospect of groping through the unknown darkness above. "It shall be a perilous journeying," he said fearfully. "I would that we might tarry yet a little."

"Th'art in great and intolerable dread and fear, Gloria Patri," said a candid youth in the background, and Gloria, to every one's surprise, began to weep shamelessly. "I would that we might tarry," he said, "truly I fear some evil thing in the tower."

This weakness on the part of his rival

gave Roger new courage. "Tarrying draweth peril," he said boldly; "let us go up in speedy manner and all shall be well, to my thinking. There be many of the brethren even now in the tower."

This was a happy inspiration—the bell-ringers, of course, would be up there already, which was a very consoling thought. Brother Roger led the way and they cautiously commenced the ascent, each one fearfully expecting the groaning of the ghost above.

They reached the top without adventure, and crowded to the edge of the parapet, with big round eyes of wonder cautiously peering over into the mysterious depths that yawned beneath. It was hard to believe that the vast, columned place that spread itself out enormous under the well of the tower was really the familiar old church of every-day life.

Then they began to point out to each other in excited whispers the various

changes to be noted in the ordering of the church, the splendid red cloth laid on the floor for the King to walk on, the magnificent faldstool, draped in cloth of gold, and placed in the middle of the sanctuary.

Gloria alone seemed to find no satisfaction in the splendours, not even when it was pointed out to him that all the people in the church would see him as well as the King. He still shivered and gulped embarrassingly and refused to be comforted. Roger began to regard him with undisguised contempt.

Before the excitement of the first arrival had had time to exhaust itself, the bells far above them in the tower began to boom and clang in a muffled sort of way, and immediately the Schola bethought itself that Brother Thomas, their great friend, would be in the belfry, and would very likely show them the bells.

Brother Thomas was a lay-brother of gigantic proportions, especially of gigantic

breadth, and the chief of the bell-ringers. He was one of the best friends the Schola possessed in the community, having a very soft heart in his big frame, and he had also command of an inexhaustible stock of fishing-tackle in his other capacity of keeper of the fish-tanks. So with the consciousness of possessing a friend at court, the whole party mounted a stage to the belfry, passing all the way through a roaring whirlpool of sound.

Brother Thomas, with his men behind him, was tugging at his rope, and smiled a Titanic smile of welcome when he saw the small black figures at the door; conversation in that thunderous place was quite out of the question. But presently there was a pause for rest, the bells ceased, though for a time the tower still went on singing, and Brother Thomas, seated on a bench and mopping his brow, received the members of the Schola. In a few brief words they framed their petition. They wanted

to see the bells, and only just for a minute to go up on the top of the tower.

Though Brother Thomas pretended at first that the thing was not to be thought of, he yielded to a little pleading, and the Schola followed him joyfully as he proceeded heavily up the next flight of steps. And though these were the darkest and steepest of all, no one felt afraid with Brother Thomas, like a protecting mountain, moving in front.

Brother Roger was next to Gloria as they went up this black stair, and once, when they got pushed together, he could feel that the favoured Gloria was still trembling and shivering all over. And there in the darkness came a thought to Roger that made him start as though a cold ghost's hand had touched him.

For the thought said, "Gloria isn't fit to sing, it isn't safe for the honour of the house to let him sing, and how easily you might get him left behind when the others

go down; and then you would have to sing yourself."

Before and behind him the feet were shuffling on the stone steps round and round, up and up; and with every turn the thought seemed to wind itself into his mind more and more firmly.

"It's for the good of the house, it's even for Gloria's good," said the thought; "and oh! you'll have the singing after all; the glory of the singing after all!"

Brother Roger set his teeth and breathed hard. A little while longer and they were all standing round Brother Thomas, gazing up at the great dim shapes looming out above them in the blackness, and Brother Thomas was giving them the story of each; how here was Gabriel, the bell that they rang in thunderstorms; and yonder was his brother Galiena, and the holy water bell; and there was the Newport, named after old Prior Newport who bought it; and nearest of all hung the famous "Haut

et Cler," the tenor bell that every one knew so well.

Roger was standing away out of sight in the shadow while the good bell-ringer was talking, and presently he came up softly to Gloria. And he put his arm round Gloria's neck and whispered in his ear and drew him aside. And what he whispered was that the Precentor, Master John, had come up into the tower, and that he had been to ask him if he and Gloria might go up to the top, and the Precentor said yes, they might, and that he thought some of the brethren were up there already. And all the while he kept his arm round Gloria's shoulder very kindly. "*A man must sometimes set a candle before the devil,*" says a proverb of that day, but Roger was setting a whole altarful.

The story sounded suspicious, and Gloria was not very much deceived; but he was feeling cold and frightened and lonely,

and that brotherly arm of Roger's brought comfort and companionship. His was a friendly little heart that answered very readily to the call of kindness, and he thanked Roger and allowed himself to be drawn away.

No one noticed them so, for just at that moment Brother Thomas was engaged in lifting up each in turn to tap the holy water bell and put his ear close by to hear it ring, and the boys were all looking at him. So once again Gloria Patri faced the weird black stairs.

He did not feel at first so frightened as before, for Roger gave him a taper to carry, and they kept their hands joined. But they had not gone very far, when all of a sudden that dreadful cold fear struck upon him again, so strongly and horribly, that he fancied an arm reached out from the wall before him and tried to bar his way. In a panic he turned and clung to Roger. "Oh, Roger," he cried, "I am in no good

case, I am truly in great and intolerable fear. Go we back, good Roger, go we back."

But Roger resolutely refused to retreat. "I am greatly heavied that you trust me not," he said; "and 'tis but a little way we have to go."

He shook off Gloria roughly and pushed him forward, and Gloria went on, trembling. But as they proceeded the fear in his heart died away somewhat, and he grew calmer again. At every turn now the steps grew steeper, and an occasional opening in the wall gave a glimpse of the white land far below, for the storm had passed by this time and the night was fair. And presently they came to a final door which opened to the smallest key after a little fumbling.

And there above them was the quiet midnight sky, clear shining peacefully with many stars, and around the four great pinnacles rose solemnly. Roger stepped out upon the tower and Gloria followed

him. Then, when they had gone a few paces over the thin snow, Roger slipped back through the door again, banged it to behind him and locked it, and then, with eyes tight shut in fear, plunged down the black stone stairs.

Gloria heard the noise of the closing door, and, turning, flung himself against it with all his might. "Roger, Roger," he cried, in a frenzy of fear. "Oh, leave me not alone, dear Roger; have ye then no ruth for me, oh, leave me not alone for the love of Jesu." But Roger was scudding round and round as hard as he could go far below in the winding staircase.

Gloria put his finger in the key-hole and tried to shake the door, but it was oaken and massive, and did not even move; he beat against it frantically until his hands were all covered with blood; he ran backwards and forwards like a hunted thing, seeking vainly to fly the white horror of the great tower.

"Oh, false knave, Roger," sobbed the lonely Gloria, sinking down at last exhausted; "oh, false, false knave, that would despoil me of my singing. I am supplanted and cast out by thee, false shrew. I pray God guerdon thee."

Clang! clang! clang! came the voice of the tenor bell from below, and picking up its fellows, the thunder of the bells began again, and again the tempest of sound went storming in tumult round the great tower. No hope in shouting now. Gloria sank down sobbing on the bitter snow.

"God is sore angered with me," he thought, for the bells seemed like a terrible voice from heaven. "Oh, Moder Mary, Holy Virgin," he whispered, "pray for me, for I know not how to forgive him for a cruel, false knave."

Then, thinking of the Blessed Mother and her kindness, he knelt down by the battlement of the tower to pray. And he began with great faith and simplicity *Alma*

The King walked with downcast eyes, and hands piously clasped upon his book of hours. [p. 181]

Redemptoris Mater, the psalm Master Lydgate had so often taught them to sing, to make them like the little boy Chaucer his master wrote of.

He was sure as he said it that help would come, and he half expected it straight from the sky, as the angels came to the shepherds long ago. But it came in another way, for when presently the bells ceased ringing, there rose from below clear and distinct on the frosty air the sound of many voices singing, men's voices in a Christmas carol of mingled Latin and English, such as our fathers loved.

"In dulci jubilo,
Let us our homage show,
Our heart's-joy reclineth
In præsepio,
And like a bright star shineth
Matris in græmio,
Alpha es et O."

So they sang, and very soothingly the voices sounded up there on the lonely tower. "It will be the guild-men going to

church in procession," thought Gloria, and he forgot his fears in the effort to listen. Again, with a strange wailing melody, came the voice of the singers—

"O Jesu parvule
My heart is sore for Thee,
Hear me I beseech Thee,
O Puer optime.
My prayer let it reach Thee,
O Princeps Gloriæ,
Trahe me post te."

The words of the simple, loving old hymn fell like balm upon Gloria's troubled soul, and the angry, bitter thoughts against Roger went gradually clean away. "*O Jesu parvule,*" he whispered, "I do forgive him heartily. *O Princeps Gloriæ, trahe me post te.*"

They were nearer now; from where he stood by the battlements he could distinguish the band as a black moving patch on the snow. He could even distinguish the strong deep voices of the men and the treble of the prentice boys, singing with all

their hearts. And when at last they reached the church door, and the voices died away, a great thought came to Gloria Patri, so great and heroic it seemed at first quite beyond his strength to carry out. "Nay," he said, "I forgive him right heartily and that sufficeth."

Then it seemed that a voice was singing very softly over again the words of the hymn—

> "In dulci jubilo
> Let us our homage show."

And suddenly he cried, "O Lord, I will for Thy dear worthie love, I will give no excuse for my non-coming; no one shall know it was Roger; they shall hold it all my fault."

And that was Gloria Patri's Christmas homage to the King of kings.

. . . . . .

Brother Roger did not keep up his headlong pace the whole of the way down, for as we all know it is quite impossible to

sing satisfactorily if one is out of breath. So he prudently did the latter half of the descent very slowly and with several long pauses. It happened in this way that, when at last he sidled cautiously into the place of assemblage in the well of the tower, he found matters very far advanced. He had waited until the last peal ceased ringing, and when he entered he found the others looking over the parapet watching the great procession enter. Roger slipt in among them quite unobserved in the excitement.

Slowly in they came two by two, the thurifers first walking backwards and tossing the smoking censers high in a stately manner; then the crucifix borne by two coped priests, with candles carried on either side, and after that a long array of priests bearing relics and the great gospel-book, all splendid in golden copes and with torches flaming around them; then the sombre lines of black-hooded monks, and

behind them the Lord Abbot with his deacon and subdeacon, magnificent in full pontificals; and last of all came the little King in the royal robes of England, the crown borne before him and the great lords of the household in attendance. He walked with downcast eyes and hands piously clasped upon his book of hours, for from childhood, through the long trouble of his life, his soul was ever the same, gentle and pious. And all the people in the church turned and made obeisance to the King as he passed, and the sad little King with boyish lips was praying for his people.

The royal part of the procession was already well up the church before Master John made his appearance in the tower; he could not leave the sacristy until all had started. But he lost no time in marshalling his small army, and had them arrayed in order, with music and all complete, before the King had reached his faldstool. And then came the cry for Gloria Patri.

"Where is he? Where is he?" cried Master John distractedly. "Hath no one seen the child?" Brother Roger, standing conspicuously in the front rank, kept his eyes severely on the ground, and no Gloria was forthcoming.

There was not a moment to spare. The Lord Abbot was already at the altar, and might begin the Mass at any moment.

"Oh, the wicked child!" cried the exasperated Precentor. "Roger, quick, ye must do it in his stead; stand up here and list while I give the note."

Roger stepped forward eagerly, his hour had come. A wave of excitement passed over the Schola, but Roger was quite calm. The Precentor gave the note, and he drew in a long breath in the proper way.

Why did they all stare at him so strangely, they frightened him with their big eyes? It was all well with him, and yet despite the great breath, the note

refused to come, and he began to feel strange and giddy.

Master John strode across and shook him angrily. "Roger, Roger," he whispered. "What ails thee, silly Roger?"

They thought every moment to hear *In nomine Patris*, the voice of the Lord Abbot grown impatient, beginning the Mass. But it was no tone of the Abbot's that broke at last the stillness, the wonderful note came surely from the poor little shivering body of the wicked Roger, and a note so strong and sweet and low that Master John stepped back from him in fear. And it was the first note of the *Adeste Fideles*, the sweetest hymn of Christendom.

Læti—triumphantes—it rang forth—and surely angels were dancing among the rafters of the old church, for the gladness and the triumph swelled up greatly to Heaven, and then with hush and awe sank down in adoration to the lowly Bethlehem.

And it all came from Roger, trembling now no longer, but standing boldly before all the church, with hands together pointed in prayer, with head thrown back and eyes brim-full of tears. And below him in the gloom of the nave a world of upturned faces, and the little King, with clasped hands, weeping too.

A moment's pause, and Roger feared that the glad power that possessed him would leave him now. But strong and true, and with the same unearthly ring, came the call to look on Him that was born of woman, and the same strong voice of triumph called Him King.

So to the end with one great, piteous cry of love—

"Venite, Venite adoremus,
Venite adoremus Bethlehem."

It was finished. The choir took up the strain, shrilling clear and high, for they had caught something of the exultation too. Yet after that beautiful song of

ecstasy even the strong deep chant of the monks seemed poor and thin.

But Roger, sinful and afraid once more, had thrown himself on the ground, and was pressing his face against the cold stone of the floor. And the Precentor, moved with pity, lifted him up where he lay and held him in his arms. "Oh, Roger, Roger, my little Brother," he cried, with tears streaming down his cheeks, "how fortuned ye to sing so heavenly, heavenly sweet?"

And he held him and would not let him go, though his whole heart was bursting with a great longing to be forgiven, to throw himself at Gloria's feet and beg and entreat to be forgiven. For all he wanted now was to be good; he wanted to be good for ever, to suffer anything to make sure of going to Heaven in the end. But Master John still held him, and the others crowded round, silent and staring like sheep, till they were sent back angrily to their places.

It was no use struggling, he must wait a little, and presently slip away.

And so he knelt by Master John, hearing Mass, but all the while whispering under his breath, "Gloria, Gloria Patri, forgive me, forgive me."

And all the while he was watching his opportunity to slip away, and go to Gloria. At last, after the Elevation, when he saw that the Precentor's eyes were tight shut and his lips moving in prayer, he tried, and had almost reached the door when he felt a strong hand on his shoulder holding him. Then he struggled and cried aloud, and the good Precentor believed him crazed and covered his mouth lest he should disturb the church. And now he was in a worse pass than ever, for when the long Mass was at last over, he was kept apart from the rest and given over to the infirmarians. And they, being very tired, shut him in a small cell, giving him many coverings against the cold, and left him,

bidding him sleep. And as they were going, and all hope of escape seemed lost, he tried to tell them of Gloria up in the tower; but they thought him crazed all the more, and sadly shook their heads and went away.

He flung off the comfortable warm wrappings as soon as they had gone; such things were not for one who had sinned and was unforgiven. He stood in the middle of the cell feeling the cold draw in through the crevices of the window and the locked door, shivering as it struck his flesh like icy water, making it creep and ache. And he was glad of the pain, and glad to hear his poor teeth chattering, and he only wished he could open the window and make it worse. And his comfort was to think of all he would do for Gloria when he was forgiven; how he would always help him to get the note at choir practice, and never again pretend not to notice when his gown was tugged. And he would ask to

give up his office to Gloria, and on cold nights he should always have one of his blankets, and everything else he asked for he should have.

Presently he dozed a little, but it was still dark when a step outside startled him, and from its sound he knew it could not be one of the monks. A great hope sprang up in his heart, for he knew that the key was in the lock on the other side. He beat at the door frantically, shouting and calling aloud.

And to his joy he heard the key grate in the lock and the door open, showing to his eyes, accustomed to the dark, the outline of a big man in the opening. Then a thick voice from the shadow asked where was to be had a draught of ale for an honest, thirsty man? and before the words were out of his mouth Roger was past him and away, grasping tight the precious keys of the tower and scarcely believing in his fortune.

The whole place was still as death, but once he saw in the distance the figure of a monk with a lantern going towards the church, and knew that it could not be very far off the time for the Mass of the Aurora, the second Mass of the Nativity, sung always when the first faint light of morning could be seen in the eastern sky. But he reached the door that led to the great tower unobserved, fearing nothing now but that some one should stop him before he could get to Gloria.

And as he climbed up the winding staircase he thought eagerly of what he would do at the top; how he would stand still and let Gloria smite him in the face and bear it meekly, and he would let himself be trampled on and his head knocked against the wall, and all the while he would be quite patient and kiss Gloria's feet and beg to be forgiven. And perhaps Gloria would make him fall down-stairs, and then he might be killed. Only he must not be

quite killed, because he must make confession first and be shriven, and perhaps it would be better to be beaten a little too; and then he would die and go to God and sing like that for ever. And as he hurried round and round up the steps, he never even thought of the ghost, being so full of hope and penitence.

And at last he reached the little door that had Gloria on the other side of it. He did not open it at once, as he had at first intended, because he was afraid that Gloria might rush past him before he had time to ask for pardon, so he knelt down on the step outside and cautiously opened the door a very little way.

"Gloria," he whispered through the crack, "I beseech thee in very lowly wise to pardon me. Behold my meekness, broder, and leave thy anger."

He listened, still holding the door, but no answer came from the tower to this appeal. He must be sleeping, thought

Roger, and he banged the door to once or twice with a great clatter.

"Gloria," he cried more loudly, "I come to make amends, good broder. I beseech thee as much as I can to pardon me."

And still no answer. In sheer desperation Roger thrust the fingers of both hands through the narrow opening of the door and held them there. "Oh, leave thy anger, dear Gloria," he pleaded; "see, I would have ye crack my fingers in the door to make amends." And he shut his eyes and shuddered at the thought of the agony when the heavy door should bite in upon them.

But never a sound from beyond the door, and the cold air cut his fingers like a knife; and a breath of it swept in upon his face, ghostly, like the touch of a cold hand. And a terrible thought came then to Brother Roger.

He started up and pushed the door wide open and rushed forth on to the snowy roof.

"Gloria, Gloria, mine own dear broder," he wailed. "Oh, speak to me for the love of Blessed Jesu, but one word."

But the silence of the great tower mocked him. And right in front by the parapet a dreadful white thing, hunched and patient and still.

Not Gloria, not Gloria, that suffering thing: but the warm boy's arms were thrown round it, and a hot, flushed cheek pressed close against its coldness. "Oh, wake, dear Gloria, wake; it is all over now."

And the child's cry of agony that went up to God from the tower was drowned as it rose by the cry of the mighty bells, the bells loud pealing for the breaking of the dawn of the Nativity of Christ.

And in the eastern sky the first faint streaks of morning—but the dawn had come for Gloria already, in a much more splendid way.

. . . . . .

The Lord Abbot would not hear of one single alteration in any of the Christmas festivities. "So one of us went for Christmas to our brethren of Abingdon," said the Lord Abbot, "we should be simple to weep. And now hath this little one gone to that great house our Father Benedictus ruleth over in Heaven." And when one suggested that the child by the just retribution of God had been punished thus terribly for disobedience, the Abbot was very displeased, and severely rebuked that Brother for his lack of charity.

What would have become of Roger that dreadful morning, but for a fortunate accident, it is very difficult to say. It happened, however, that when the ceremonies of the second Mass were over, Master John Lydgate had occasion to visit the belfry to see if the lights had all been well extinguished. And as he stood there with his lantern peering all round into the gloom,

he heard a moaning and a pitiful sobbing somewhere near. A man of less stout heart might have thought of the ghost and fled, but Master John, who was always on the look-out for incidents he could put into his great poem, proceeded to investigate. And under a bench he found a limp and abject figure which on further inspection proved to be Roger, half dead with fear and moaning that he was a murderer and had killed dear Gloria and had lost his soul for ever.

It was perhaps fortunate for Roger that his finder was Master Lydgate, for though there were many wiser men in the monastery, there were few who had a kinder heart. And Master John in his youth had been no great saint himself, as with much humility he told the world in the verses he left for his testament.

So now he did not fall to rebuking and chiding the sinful Roger, neither did he threaten him overmuch. "Nay, child,"

he said, when he had heard his story, "ye shall indeed be beaten with many stripes: but say not God shall damn thee, little Brother; for that were to rob Almighty Jesu of the thank of His bitter Passion."

And then Master John, who was never so exact in his observance of the rule as might have been desired, did a very irregular thing. "Kneel down, child," he said, "and confess thy sin to me, God's simple priest; and for penance ye shall go to my Lord Abbot." And this in the teeth of the Obedientiary, which forbade the members of the Schola to go to any but the Abbot or Prior for confession.

So Roger confessed and was shriven to his very great comfort. And afterwards he did long and bitter penance, losing his office in the school and becoming a byword and a reproach among his brethren. Some, indeed, were loud in their complaints that the Abbot should suffer such a reprobate to remain among them. "*Tantillus puer*

tantusque peccator!" they used to say, with St. Augustine, "so small a child and so grievous a sinner!"

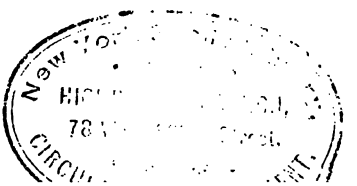
And Roger tried very hard to bear it all meekly and with a contrite heart, and grew up a good monk, serving God faithfully. And long years afterwards, when the memory of his sin had passed away and he had come to be a great man in the house, sometimes on Christmas Eve he would tell the story to the brethren by the fire of the calefactory. And he always wept and begged them to pray for him. And he would say he had ever believed, and did so then most firmly, that not he, but Gloria sang the hymn that night, and for Gloria it was perhaps his first song with the angels. Then would some of the brethren, who were philosophers, take upon themselves to rebuke him for his words. "*Anima est forma corporis*, carissime pater," they would say, quoting the Angelical. But Roger the monk was stout in maintain-

ing, in spite of difficulties, that Gloria sang, not he, though submitting in all things to the authority of holy Thomas. And he would often avoid further criticism by quoting the poem Master John Lydgate wrote in memory of the event, of which the last verse ran like this—

"God that was of Mary bore,
And death suffered on roode tree,
Lette us never byfore lore,
Jesu if Thy wille be.
Comely Queen that art so free,
Pray thy Sone for oure sake,
In Heaven a sight of you to see,
And here to amendes make. Amen."

And so would the ending of the story be in friendliness, and with a prayer to the Blessed Mother of us all, than which, to my thinking, there can be no better way.

THE END



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